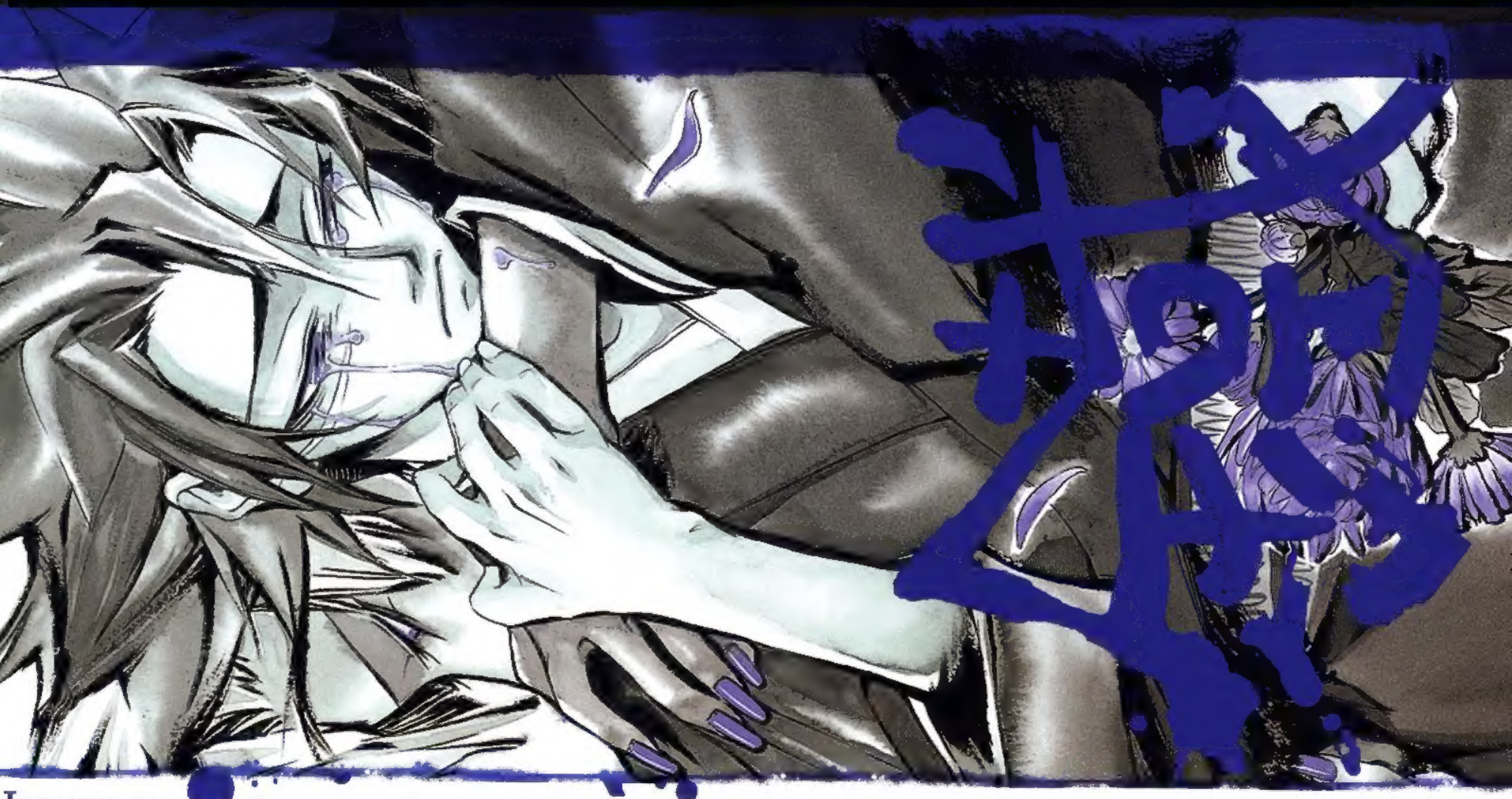

INSPIRED THE HIT ANIME!

PEACE MAKER鐵 3

KUROGANE

™

NANAE CHRONO

PEACE MAKER. KUROGANE.

Peace Maker Kurogane 3

Created by NANAE CHRONO

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PEACE MAKER鐵
KUROGANE

Volume 3
by Nanae Chrono

ICHIMURA TETSUNOSUKE

HIJIKATA'S PAGE

BRASH TETSU HAS JOINED THE SHINSENGUMI TO LEARN TO BECOME STRONG. HE WANTS TO GET REVENGE ON HIS PARENTS' MURDERERS, CHOUSHUU REBELS. ALTHOUGH HE JOINED THE SHINSENGUMI WITH ASPIRATIONS OF BECOMING A SWORDSMAN, HE'S BEEN ASSIGNED THE THANKLESS DUTY OF HIJIKATA'S PAGE.

HIJIKATA TOSHIZOU

VICE COMMANDER

BECAUSE OF HIS COLD DEMEANOR AND BRUTALITY, HE IS KNOWN AS THE "DEMON VICE COMMANDER."

YAMANAMI KEISUKE

VICE COMMANDER

THIS BUDDHA-LIKE VICE COMMANDER COULDN'T BE LESS LIKE HIJIKATA. HE'S OFTEN SEEN CARRYING HIS ABACUS.

OKITA SOUJI

CAPTAIN OF THE FIRST SQUAD

THE BEST SWORDSMAN IN THE SHINSENGUMI. HE'S GENERALLY CALM AND FRIENDLY, BUT WIELDING A BLADE CAN TRANSFORM HIM INTO A HEARTLESS KILLER.

KITAMURA SUZU

A BOY WITH SILVER HAIR. HE HAS NO FAMILY AND LIVED WITH HIS MASTER, YOSHIDA TOSHIMARO, UNTIL YOSHIDA WAS SLAIN DURING THE IKEDAYA INCIDENT. NOW SUZU IS...?

KONDOU ISAMI

DIRECTOR

A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE SHINSENGUMI AND ALSO A MASTER AT THE SHIEIKAN DOJO IN EDO, THE MAIN DOJO OF THE TENNEN RISHIN STYLE.

MAIN CHARACTERS

NAGAKURA SHINPACHI

CAPTAIN OF THE SECOND SQUAD

SMALL BUT STRONG. A SWORDSMAN LIKE OKITA. HE FIGHTS IN THE SHINTO-MUNEN SCHOOL STYLE.

TOUDOU HEISUKE

CAPTAIN OF THE EIGHTH SQUAD

ONE OF THE THREE STOOGES OF THE SHINSENGUMI. HE LIKES CUTE THINGS, INCLUDING TETSU.

HARADA SANOSUKE

CAPTAIN OF THE TENTH SQUAD

A GIANT AMONG MEN, HE'S A MASTER OF THE SPEAR IN THE HOZOIN SCHOOL STYLE. HE'S GOOD FRIENDS WITH SHINPACHI.

ICHIMURA TATSUNOSUKE

TETSU'S OLDER BOTHER AND GUARDIAN. HE'S ALWAYS WORRYING ABOUT TETSU. TATSU WANTS NOTHING TO DO WITH SWORDFIGHTING, AND IS A BOOKKEEPER FOR THE SHINSENGUMI.

YAMAZAKI SUSUMU

SHINSENGUMI NINJA

A SPY FOR THE SHINSENGUMI, HE REPORTS TO HIJIKATA. TACITURN AND COLD, HE HOLDS MANY SECRETS.

SAYA

TETSU SAVED HER FROM SOME RUFFIANS, AND NOW THE TWO ARE FRIENDS. SAYA CANNOT SPEAK, BUT COMMUNICATES THROUGH HAND GESTURES AND WRITING.

SHINSENGUMI MEMBERS

PERSONS OUTSIDE THE SHINSENGUMI

THE STORY OF PEACE MAKER

IN THE FIRST YEAR OF GENJI, 1864, JAPAN WAS IN GREAT TURMOIL. MILITANT AND XENOPHOBIC FORCES, WHICH HAD LONG OPPOSED THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE, ADVOCATED EXPELLING WESTERN INFLUENCE AND RESTORING THE EMPEROR IN KYOTO TO POWER. TO PROTECT THE SHOGUNATE'S INTEREST IN KYOTO, A LEGENDARY PEACEKEEPING FORCE WAS FORMED FROM TWO HUNDRED-SOME RONIN. THEY WERE THE SHINSENGUMI. THIS IS THE STORY OF ICHIMURA TETSUNOSUKE, WHO SOUGHT TO JOIN THEM.

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病銃別遭泪

OINK.
OINK GOINK!
SQUEEEE...
Grrg?
OINK.
Hrrrrg!
OIIIINK!
Snorrrrt...

第拾一話 Chapter 11

涙 Tears

だいじゅういちわ

なみだ

AS EVENING FELL ON THE TWENTY-THIRD, THE NEWS WAS MADE PUBLIC AMONG THE SHINSENGUMI:
YAMANAMI KEISUKE HAD COMMITTED SEPPUKU FOR THE CRIME OF ABANDONING HIS SQUAD.
SNIFF...
SANO.
JUST BLOW YOUR NOSE, ALREADY.
IT'S DISGUSTING.
I CAN'T HELP IT...
sniff

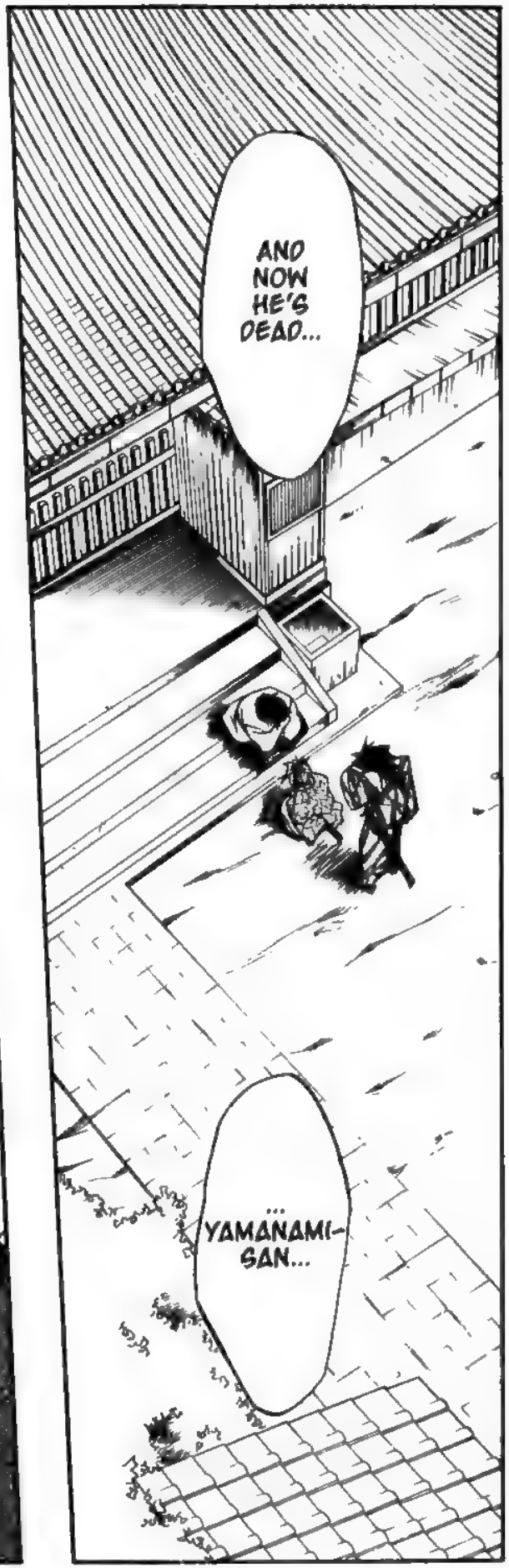
HEISUKE.
DID YOU SAY YOUR GOODBYES TO YAMANAMI-SAN?
DO YOU THINK...
...IT WAS CLEAN? OVER QUICKLY?
.....

.....
...KK!
BEST SEPPUKU HE'D EVER SEEN.
HE SAID IT WAS CLEAN AS COULD BE.
YOU KNOW WHAT KONDOU-SAN SAID?
I JUST SAW HIM...
...I JUST SAW HIM TALKING AND WALKING AROUND...

Whap!

REALLY.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
YAMANAMI-SAN HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO COMMIT RITUAL SUICIDE? WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A WORD TO ME?
Thwap


AND NOW HE'S DEAD...
...YAMANAMI-SAN...

THIS IS UNACCEP-TABLE.
HE RETURNED TO THE COMPOUND HOURS AGO... NOON! TODAY!
SUCH A HORRID AND UNDIGNIFIED THING, SUICIDE...
I HEARD HE LEFT THE SHIN-SENGUMI, AND THEN HE SUDDENLY KILLED HIMSELF.
IS IT REALLY TRUE?
YOU FOOLISH MAN.
YOU SAW THE COM-MANDER'S REACTION, DIDN'T YOU?
CLEARLY, HE'S HIDING SOMETHING.
JUST WHEN THINGS WERE GETTING INTERESTING...
Tsk.
LITSUMI-SAN.
SHINO-HARA-SAN.
SIR!
I NEED YOU TO INVESTIGATE SOMETHING.

Kaww
...
Krawww!
IT IS SIMPLY HUMAN NATURE...
...THE NEED TO SEE WHAT HAS BEEN HIDDEN.
Kawwww
H
H
H

HUFF
YAMANAMI-SAN...
HUFF
HUFF
Wham wham
Wham
Wham
Wham
LET ME SEE YAMANAMI-SAN!
LET ME SEE HIM!
SOMEONE!
Wham
ANYONE, OPEN THE DOOR!
Wham

scrape
IS THAT YOU, YAMANAMI-SAN?!
YAMANAMI-SAN?!
scuff
scuff
tak
rattle

YAMA-
NAMI-
SAN...
...IS
DEAD.

.....
...I...
NO...
THAT CAN'T ...
THAT'S NOT...

I KILLED HIM.
WITH THESE VERY HANDS.
……
ナカ…
ナカ…

.....
...TO KILL SUCH A BEAUTIFUL, SAINTLY MAN...?
YOU USED THESE VILE, POLLUTED HANDS...
...FILTHY HANDS.

"WOLVES OF MIBU" IS RIGHT. DOGS OF THE BAKUFU, YOU ARE.
NO, LOWER THAN DOGS!
YOU DON'T CARE THAT HE'S DEAD, DO YOU?
GIVE HIM BACK!
LET ME SEE HIS HAND, NOT YOURS.
GET THIS...
THIS...

OH...
NO...
NO, NO, NO...
...THIS PUTRID HAND OUT OF MY SIGHT...

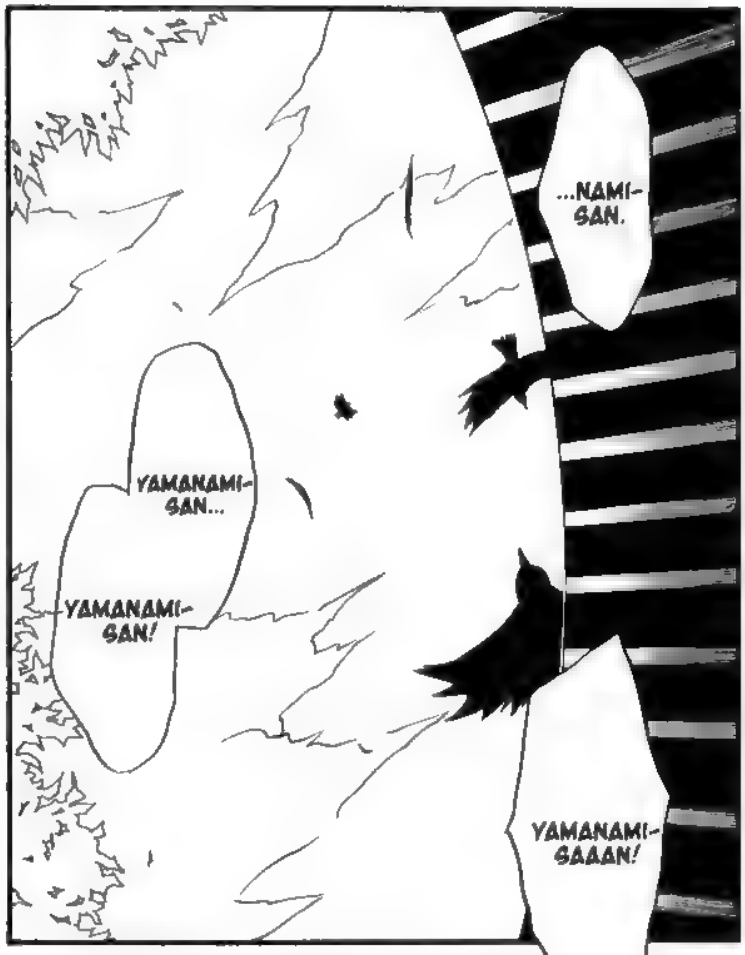
UMM...
AKESATO... SAN?
.....

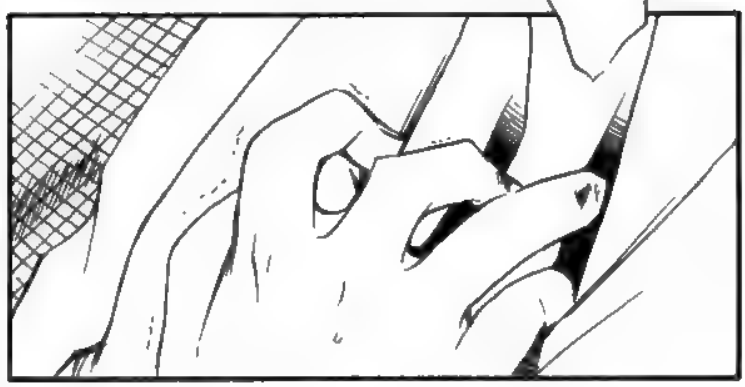
……
…NGGH!

WHEN YOU'RE TROUBLED... THE SOUND OF A BEATING HEART WILL CALM YOU.
IT ALWAYS DID FOR ME.

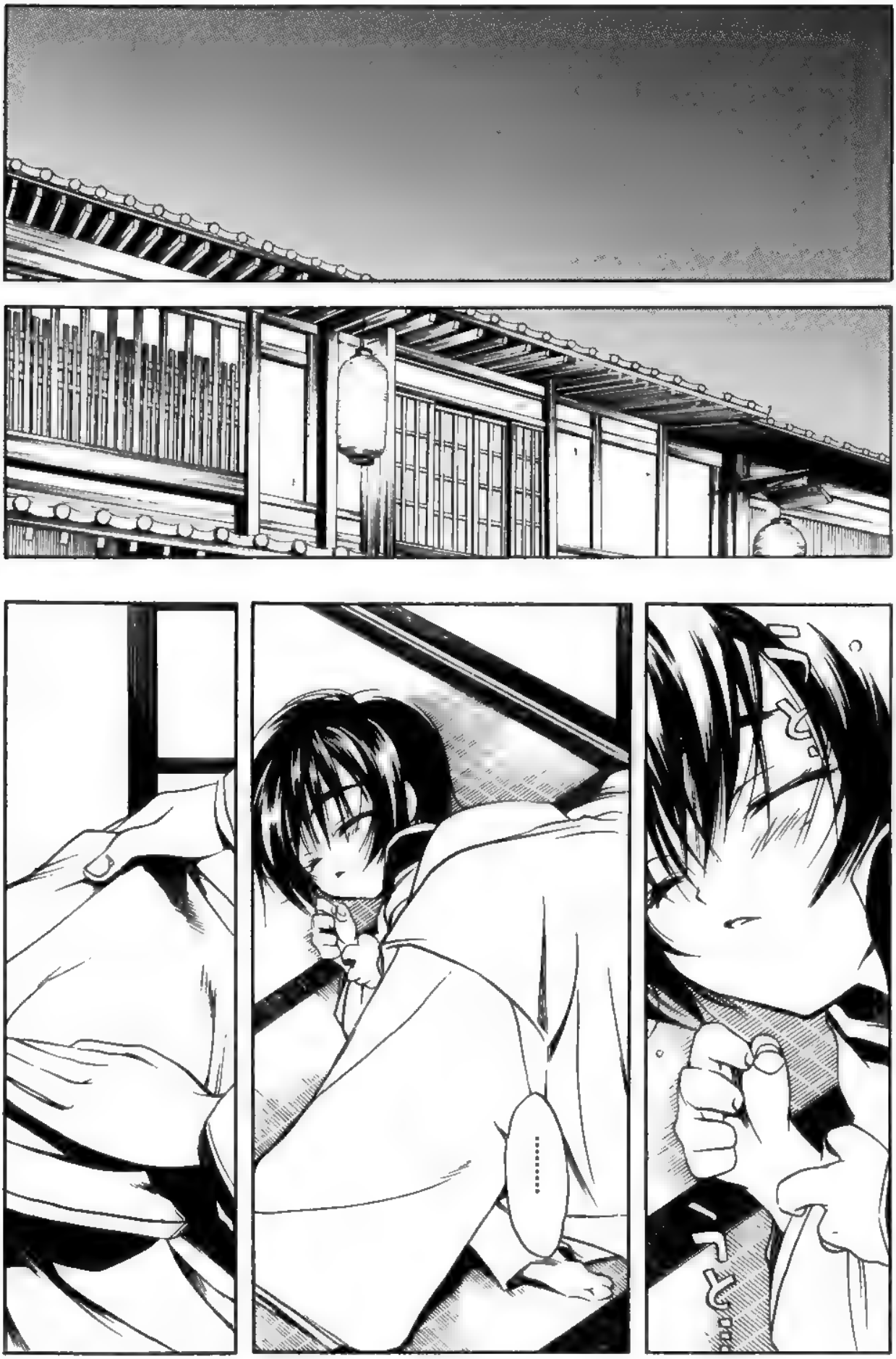
Ba-bump
Ba-bump
Ba-bump
Ba-bump
Ba-bump
I JUST DON'T... UNDER-STAND...
...WHY THINGS TURNED OUT THIS WAY...
I TRIED...
...BUT I JUST CAN'T...

AAAH...
AH...


...NAMI-SAN.
YAMANAMI-SAN...
YAMANAMI-SAN!
YAMANAMI-SAAAN!



WAAAHH!
AAAAAAHH!

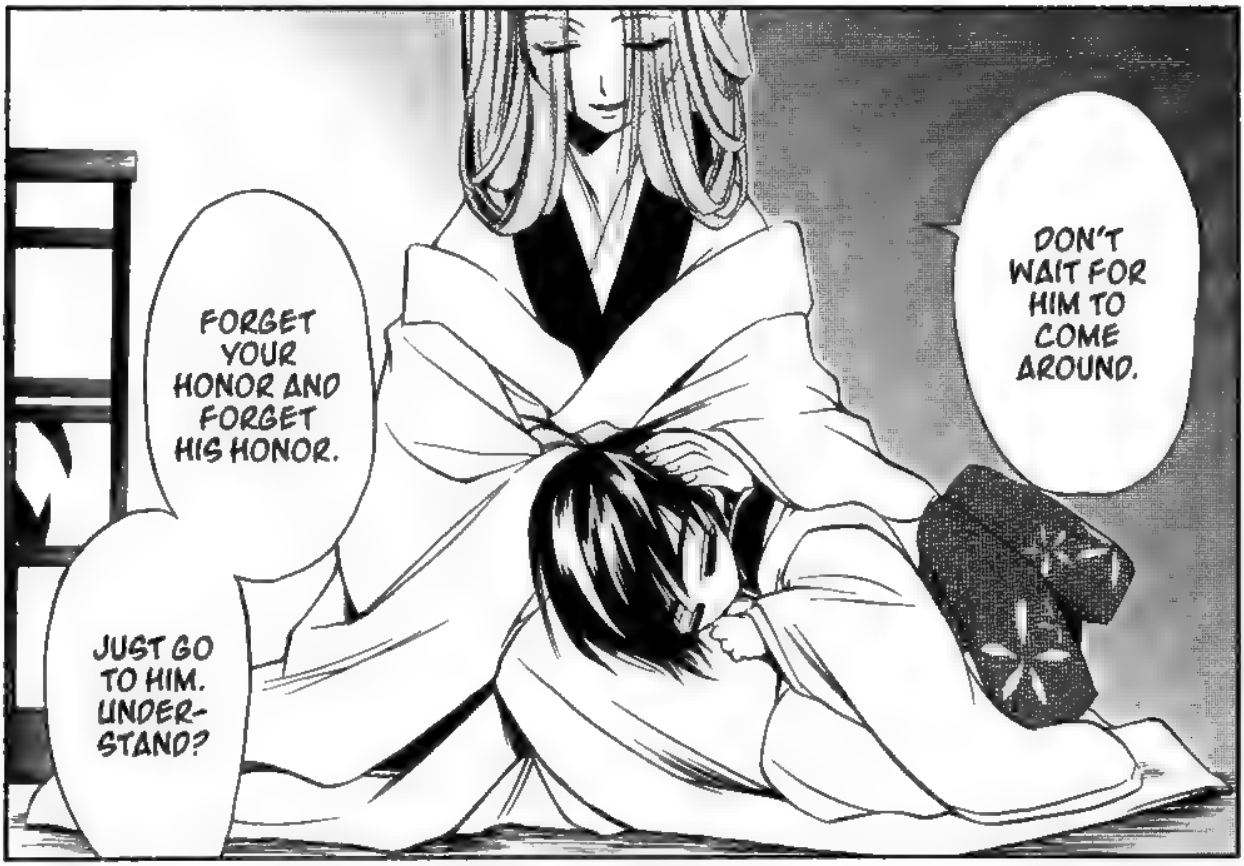

……
ヘックシュン

.....
OOPS.
DID I WAKE YOU?
YOU WERE WAITING FOR ME, WEREN'T YOU?
THANK YOU, OSAYA.

I'M SORRY I DIS-APPEARED ON YOU, OSAYA.
YOU OKAY?

SO...
...WOULD YOU MAYBE WANT...
NO, NEVER MIND THAT.
OSAYA ...
...MAY I ASK YOU SOME-THING?

ARE YOU IN LOVE?
DO YOU HAVE A SWEET-HEART?
.....
.....
IF YOU LOVE SOME-ONE, OSAYA ...
...YOU MUST LOVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART.
DON'T LET YOUR PROFESSION KEEP YOU FROM REAL LOVE. UNDER-STAND?


DON'T WAIT FOR HIM TO COME AROUND.
FORGET YOUR HONOR AND FORGET HIS HONOR.
JUST GO TO HIM. UNDER-STAND?

HA HA... AH, WELL.
I'M SORRY FOR GOING ON LIKE THIS.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
BACK TO SLEEP WITH YOU.

……
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ

JUST AS YOU DIED TODAY...
...SO DIED THE WOMAN OF THE NIGHT CALLED "AKESATO."

YAMA-NAMI-SAN...

THERE'S ONLY ONE THING LEFT FOR THIS LIVING CORPSE...
...FOR A WOMAN WITH NOTHING BUT DARKNESS FOR COMFORT, ONLY ONE THING TO DO...
RETREAT BACK TO MY ONLY HOME...
...ONLY THE SHADOWS WILL HOLD ME TIGHT.

HIKAGAMI.
WANT TO GO ON A WALK?

Chapter 12
Encounter
遭遇

SEE?
ISN'T IT HUGE?!
BUT IT'S STILL A LOT BIGGER THAN THE OLD ONE, HUH?
OF COURSE, WE DON'T USE THE ENTIRE TEMPLE AS OUR BASE.

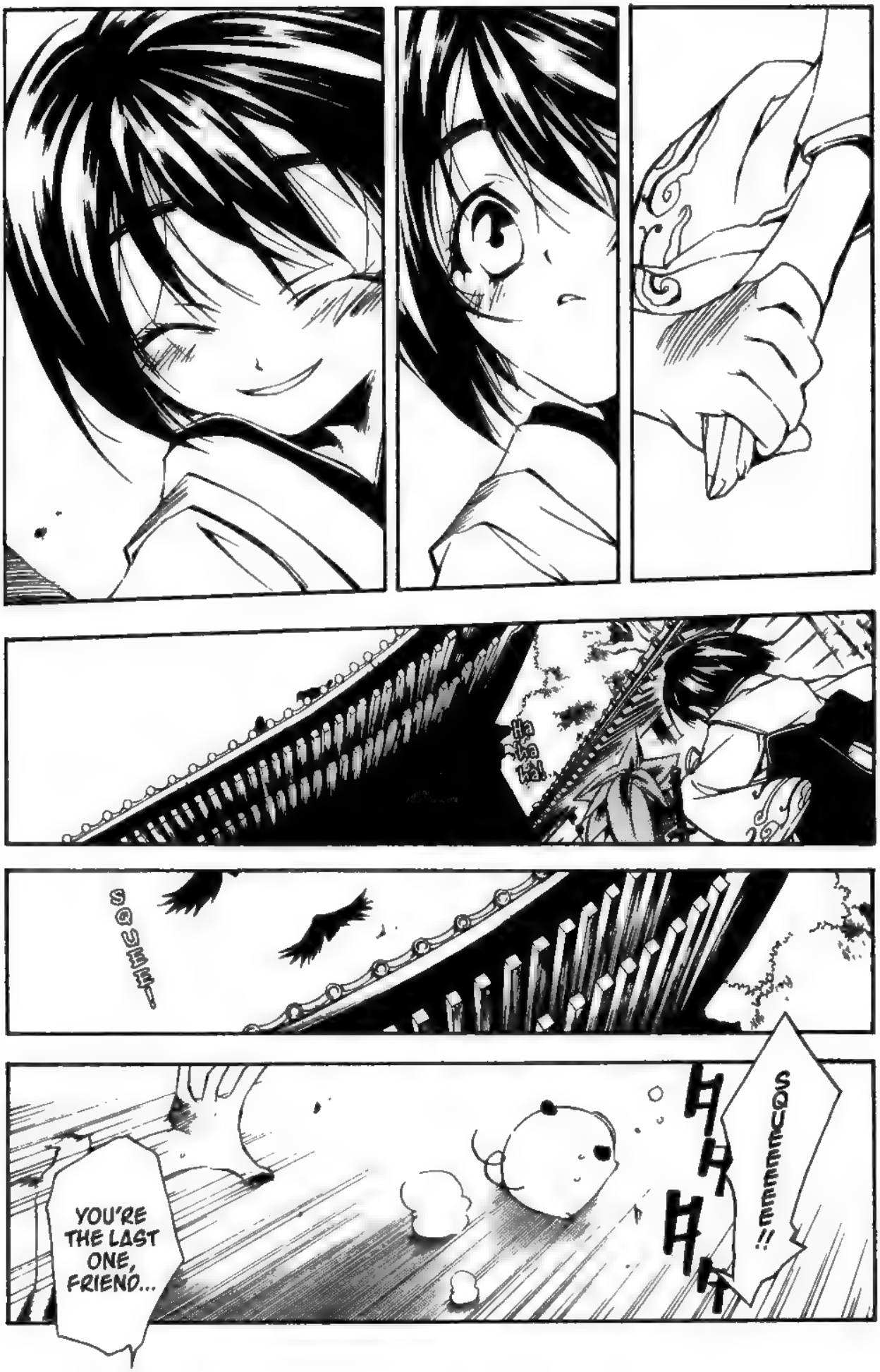
?
SINCE WE'RE HERE, WHY DON'T WE GO AND PRAY?
NISHI HONGANJI IS APPARENTLY THE HEAD-QUARTERS OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM.

.....
...AKESATO-SAN WILL LIVE IN PEACE AND GOOD HEALTH.
WE CAN PRAY THAT NO MATTER WHERE SHE GOES...

I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY.
LET'S GO, THEN.
OKAY?
Nod.

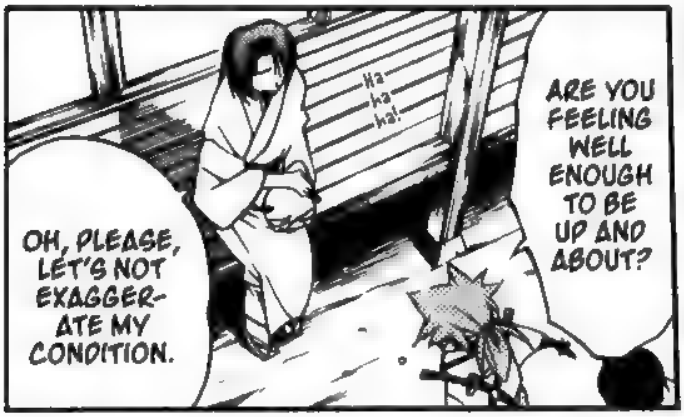
?
HUH?
?
.....
GOOD WORK!
murmur murmur
IF YOU'VE NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE, COME CLOSER FOR A BETTER LOOK.
WANT TO WATCH FROM CLOSE UP, SAYA?
Heh heh!
shake shake

NO BRING-ING GIRLS AROUND TO SHOW OFF, YA LITTLE RUNT!!
Jump!
WOO! HEY THERE, TETSU!
AH?
AND WATCH WHERE YOU'RE LOOKING, OR THAT CANNON WILL BITE YOU ON THE ASS!
SAY, WHAT?!
HA HA! YOU ONLY SAY THAT BECAUSE YOU'RE A PERV, SANO!!
SET TARGET TO ICHIMURA TETSUNO-SUKE! FIRE AT WILL!
Ha ha ha ha!
RUN FOR IT, SAYA!


ha ha ha!
—HHS O S
SOSAAAAAAOS!!
AHAHA
YOU'RE THE LAST ONE, FRIEND...

...mmmmcos
SNATCH!
...GOT 'EM ALL! ★
GONK★
OOOH! THANKS SO MUCH, TATSUNOSUKE-SAN!
Duch...
IF THERE'S ONE THING I CAN DO WELL, IT'S CATCHING SLIPPERY LITTLE BUGGERS.
TETSU SAW TO THAT, BELIEVE ME.
OH HO?

SO YOUR LITTLE BROTHER'S JUST ANOTHER LITTLE PIGGY, HMM?
TETSU?
...WHAT DO YOU MEAN? OF COURSE NOT!
WHAT'S ALL THIS?


ARE YOU FEELING WELL ENOUGH TO BE UP AND ABOUT?
Ha ha ha!
OH, PLEASE, LET'S NOT EXAGGERATE MY CONDITION.

I SEE YOU'VE GOT A VERY CUTE LITTLE GUEST WITH YOU TODAY, TETSU-KUN!
OKITA-SAN!

SAYA, THIS IS THE OKITA-SAN I'M ALWAYS TELLING YOU ABOUT.
Hello there.
AND I'VE HEARD OF YOU FROM TETSU-KUN, TOO.

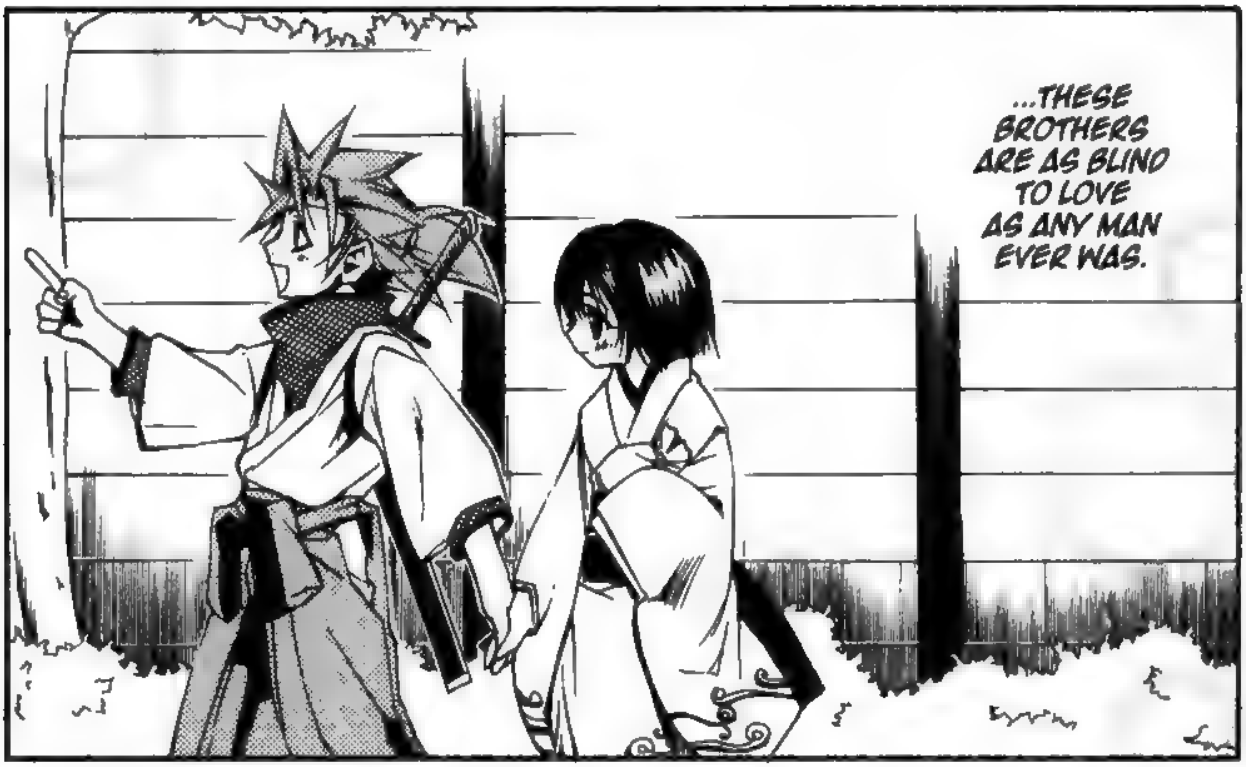
Hee hee!
YOU MUST BE THE MUTE BUT ADORABLE OSAYA-CHAN, WHO PLAYS THE SHAMISEN, BUT NOT VERY WELL. ♡
.....
Ouch...

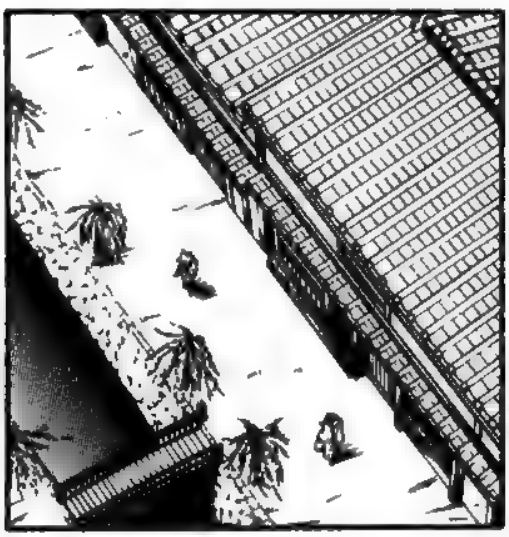
?
HMM...
...
WELL, I SHOULD TAKE A REST.
TAKE YOUR TIME, OSAYA-CHAN.
HUH?

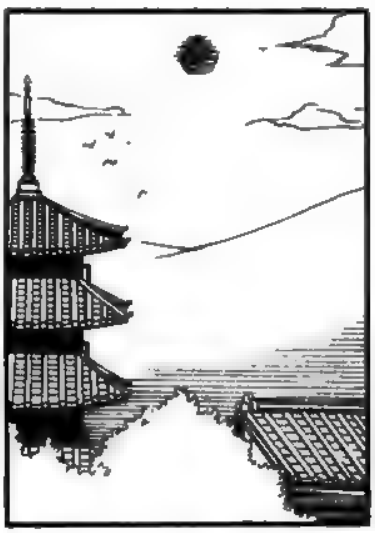
...HRG!
KOFF!
GRRFH!
CRROF!
KOFF...
WELL, WE'RE GOING THAT WAY.
JUST NOT AROUND THE BASE, OKAY?
HA HA, I KNOW. IT'S ALL GUYS!

AAA...
WAY AHEAD OF YOU!
See ya!
ALSO, IT'LL BE DARK BY THE TIME YOU HEAD BACK.
MAKE SURE TO ESCORT HER HOME.
COULD YOU NOT MENTION ANY OF THAT IN MY PRESENCE?
...BUT HE SEEMS TO ALREADY UNDER-STAND WHAT MAKES A MAN.
ALL THIS TIME, I'D THOUGHT OF HIM AS JUST A BOY...
FUNNY YOU SAY THAT...
TETSU'S JUST A BOY.
GIRL FRIEND, NOT GIRL-FRIEND!
...FRIEND?
ISN'T SHE HIS GIRL?

SIGH...
HONESTLY...
ONE LOOK AT THE GIRL'S FACE SHOULD TELL YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW.


...THESE BROTHERS ARE AS BLIND TO LOVE AS ANY MAN EVER WAS.

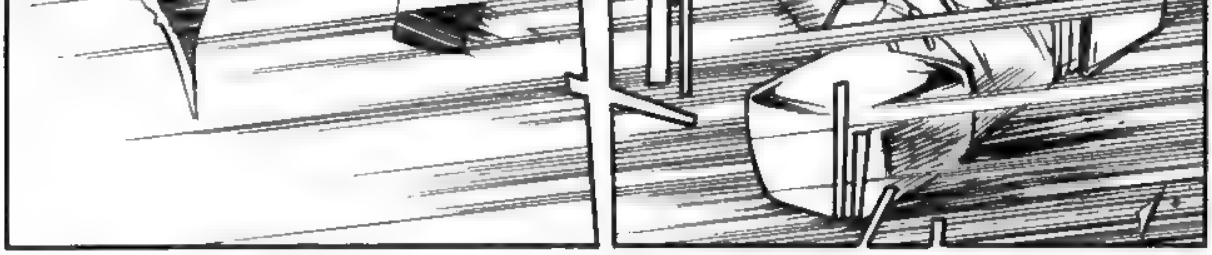


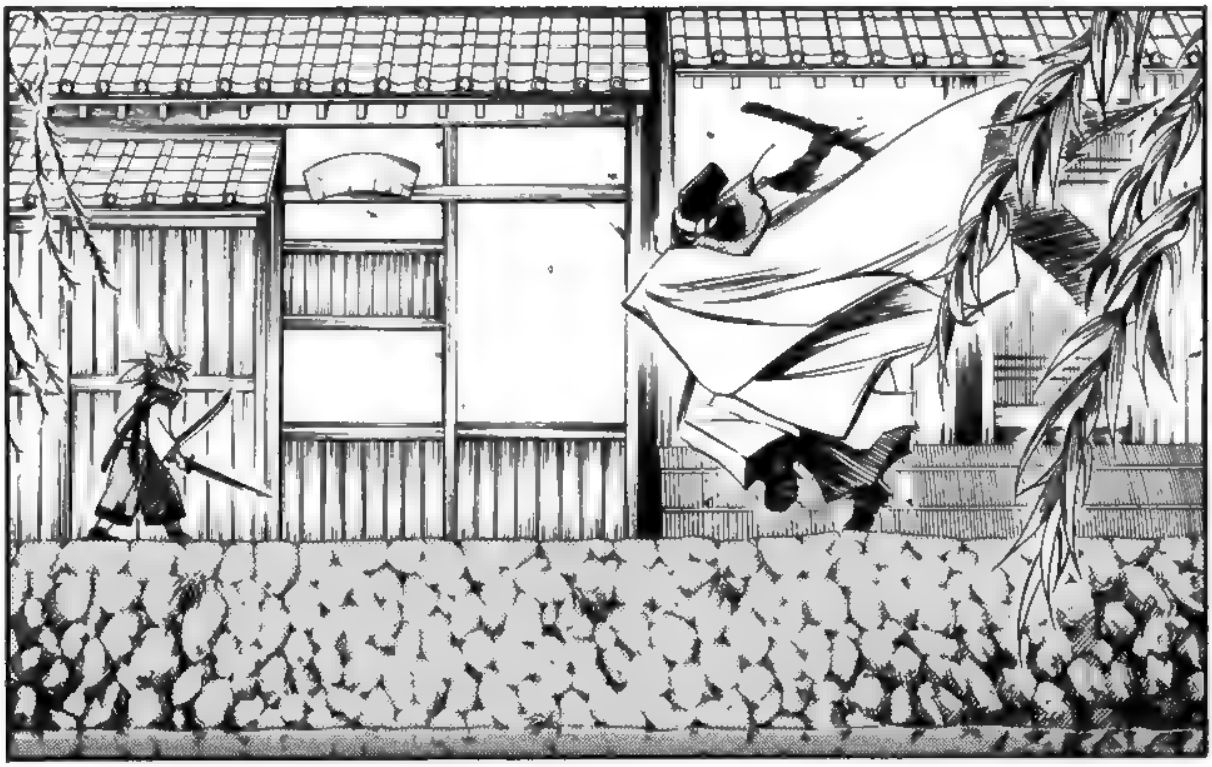


THE FOOD AT SAYA'S PLACE MIGHT BE SIMPLE, BUT IT SURE IS TASTY.
AND BEST OF ALL, IT'S FREE! ♪

WHO GOES THERE?!
NAME YOURSELF!
HE'S...

...
...HUGE...!!
GULP.
I DON'T SUPPOSE THAT AFTER YOU EXPLAIN ALL THIS...
...YOU'D ALSO GO AHEAD AND ARREST YOURSELF FOR ME...?





RRG...
RAAH...
...AAAHHH?!
HURK...!
CRAP...

NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
H.F.F.
H.F.F.
H.F.F.
.....
.....
SHOO-!
ZOOO-!
DAMN-!

HYEK.
HYEK.
...THAT'S TOO BAD.
IT MIGHT HAVE WORKED ON SOMEONE ELSE.
UNFOR-TUNATELY FOR YOU, HIKAGAMI IS IMMUNE TO PAIN.

THAT VOICE!
.....YOU.....

SUCU!
YOU'RE ALIVE...
SU...
.....!

LONG TIME NO SEE, TETSU.
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?
I'M JUST FINE.
DOING GREAT!
UM...
UH, FINE.
I'M SO GLAD TO SEE...THAT YOU'RE ALL RIGHT...!
OH, COME ON.
DON'T MAKE A FUSS. YOU DIDN'T MISS ME.
YOU'VE GROWN SINCE I SAW YOU LAST.
YOUR FACE HAS CHANGED, TOO...

OH?
WELL... I'VE...
...I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT...OF STUFF...
DID A FRIEND DIE?
HMM... NOT SURE HOW TO SAY IT...
DID YOUR MENTOR DIE?
NOT QUITE...
THEN WHAT KIND OF "STUFF" DID YOU GO THROUGH?
YEAH, I GUESS!
YOU STILL GOING DOWN TO SHIMABARA, BY THE WAY?
HUH?!
UH, WELL...
HAVE YOU SLEPT WITH A WOMAN, THEN?
Gaah!
WHAT?!!

HAVE YOU BEEN VIOLATED BY A MAN?
HAVE YOU SOLD YOUR BODY?
W-W-WHAT ARE YOU ASKIN' ME THAT FOR?!
HAVE YOU EATEN ROTTING SCRAPS OF FOOD?
HAVE YOU STOLEN FOOD...OR MONEY?
HAVE YOU DONE TRICKS FOR MEAGER ALMS?
OR, HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SO DESPERATE TO FURTHER YOUR LIFE AND AIMS...
SUZU...
...THAT YOU COMMITTED MURDER?

REALLY?
NONE OF THEM?
NOT YET, ANY-WAY.
Heh heh!
OH, YOU POOR THING! YOU CALL THAT GOING THROUGH "A LOT"?
Heh heh heh...
PATHE-TIC.
OH, OH YEAH...
HOW'S THE SHINSEN-GUMI THING GOING?
.....!

...H-HOW DID YOU KNOW?
I NEVER TOLD YOU I WAS...
HOW DID I KNOW?
YOU WERE WEAR-ING THE UNIFORM THAT NIGHT, OF COURSE.
THE NIGHT SENSEI WAS KILLED.
AT IKE-DAYA.
ガキャ
AHH.
THANK YOU, HIKA-GAMI.

I WANT TO ASK ABOUT SENSEI'S BODY.
WELL, TETSU.
.....
DID YOU MAKE SURE TO CREMATE HIM?
DID YOU GIVE HIM A PROPER SEND-OFF AT A GOOD TEMPLE?
YOSHIDA-SENSEI WAS A GREAT MAN, YOU KNOW.
HE DESERVED A PROPER MEMORIAL.

OTHER-
WISE, YOU
NEVER
KNOW...
...HE MIGHT
JUST COME
BACK TO
LIFE.
Aaaaahhhh!

第拾三話 別 Chapter 13 Apart

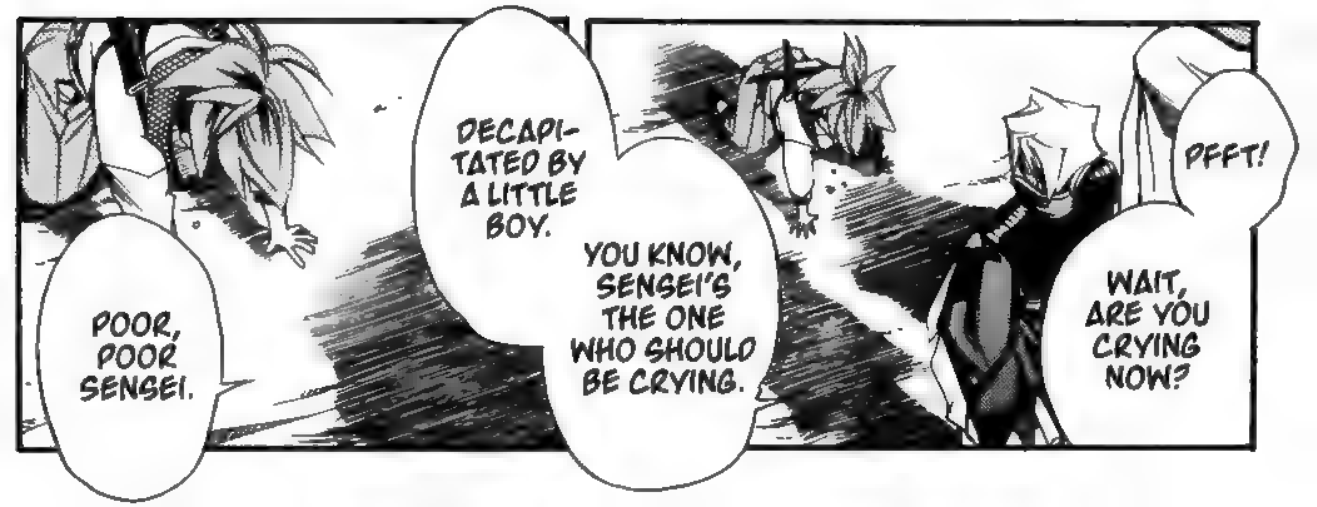
だいじゅうさんわ べつ

I SAW IT HAP-PEN...
YOUR HEAD!
IT FLEW OFF...!
HOW ...?!
.....
BUT YOU WERE DEAD!!!
PFFT!
HEH HEH.
HEH HEH HEH ...

AHA HA HA HA HA HA HA!!
YOU LITTLE FOOL!!
HA HA HA HA!
THAT REACTION WAS JUST PERFECT! COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT ANY BETTER!
WHAT DID I TELL YOU, HIKAGAMI?! YOU DO LOOK LIKE SENSEI!
HA HA HA HA! TETSU ACTUALLY THOUGHT YOU WERE HIM, COME BACK TO LIFE! AHA HA HA HA HA!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE ANYONE WOULD BE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO BELIEVE SUCH A THING!
AHA HA HA HA HA!
OH NO.
HEH HEH... HEE HEE HEE!
THE REAL SENSEI...
...IS RIGHT HERE.

NO...
A BRILLIANT, REGAL RED WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE...
...BUT SENSEI *DID* LOVE HIS BLACK, SO I WENT WITH THAT.
HA HA...
I HAD A TOP-CLASS ARTISAN COAT IT WITH THE FINEST LACQUER.
ISN'T HE GORGEOUS?

SUZU'S FALLEN APART.



"IT WAS OKITA-SAN WHO KILLED HIM. NOT ME." BUT...
"I DIDN'T DO IT."
I DIDN'T ... I...
.....
MUR-DERING LITTLE ATTACK DOG?
ANYTHING TO SAY FOR YOUR-SELF?
"IF I DON'T KILL HIM!...
...HE'LL KILL ME."
I WAS SIMPLY LUCKY TO NOT HAVE TO COMMIT MURDER.
.....
...SNUS

...AS VEN-GEANCE FOR SENSEI?
WILL YOU STRIKE ME DOWN...
...TO KILL ME?
ARE YOU GO-ING...
WHY WOULD I GO...
...AND DO SOME-THING LIKE THAT?
!!
DON'T BE SO DULL.

SNIFF...
...SUZU...
SU...
I WOULDN'T GIVE YOU THE EASY WAY OUT WITH A QUICK DEATH.
...TO KILL YOU IF WE ENCOUN-TERED EACH OTHER.
...SEN-SEI HAD ORDERED ME...
THE THIRD TIME I MET YOU...

"WHY DIDN'T I KILL HIM? WHY COULDN'T I KILL HIM? WHY DID I SPARE HIM?"
AFTER TWO MONTHS OF AGONIZING, MY ANSWER CAME.
BUT I SAVED YOUR LIFE, A PERSON I HAD ONLY MET THREE TIMES BEFORE...
...AND THEREFORE I LOST SENSEI, MY ONE SAFE HARBOR IN THE WHOLE, HORRIBLE WORLD.
AS I CRADLED HIS ROTTING FLESH, ALL I COULD THINK WAS...
I MUST GIVE HIM ALL THE SUFFERINGS THIS WORLD HAS CREATED.
I WILL FORCE UNTO YOU DESPAIR, HUMILIATION AND LONELINESS FOR EVERY MOMENT THAT YOU LIVE.

RIGHT, TETSU?
.....
HEAVEN IS THE DESIRE OF THE COVETOUS.
HELL IS THE TWISTED DELUSION OF THE POWERLESS.
BUT THE WORLD ALREADY HOLDS PLEASURES GREATER THAN HEAVEN...
...AND AGONIES WORSE THAN HELL.
YOU'RE FREE TO HATE ME, TOO.
YOU'RE FREE TO COME AFTER ME FOR BLOOD.
RIGHT, TETSU?

SHED YOUR TEARS OF BLOOD, LOSE A LIMB OR TWO...
...AND COME CRAWLING BACK TO ME THROUGH THE MUD.
MAKE SURE YOU WAIT UNTIL I'M GOOD AND READY... UNTIL THE DAY I THINK...
..."I'M SURE GLAD I LET HIM LIVE TO FEEL THIS MOMENT."
AND I'LL BE WATCHING OVER IT ALL...
...TETSU.

...SNIF...
SEVERAL DAYS LATER...
SO WHAT'S HIS PROBLEM, ANYWAY?
Murmur
THE KID'S MOPING OVER *SOMETHING* AGAIN. I'LL BE DAMNED IF I KNOW WHAT!
Murmur
Murmur
DOES HE DARE SPEAK A WORD OF IT TO ME? NOOOO...

Mutter...
JUST WHEN HE'D FINALLY GOTTEN OVER THAT NASTY BUSINESS WITH YAMANAMI-SAN...
SINCE THE MOMENT WE GOT INTO THE SHINSEN-GUMI...
...IT'S BEEN ONE BOUT OF DEPRES-SION AFTER ANOTHER.
Murmur
Murmur
Wow...
Murmur
Yikes...
ALL I CAN THINK OF IS HOW BAD THIS ENVIRONMENT IS FOR HIS PERSONAL GROWTH AND EDUCA-TION...
UHHH, TATSU?
WE GET IT. WE KNOW YOU'RE UPSET... JUST GO EASY ON THE BOOZE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY!
Murmur
OH, LEAVE ME ALONE! ABOUT THE ONLY THING I CAN DO AS WELL AS ANY OTHER MAN IS DRINK!
I'D SAY HE'S BETTER THAN ANY OTHER MAN AT THAT.
I'M SURE HE'D RATHER NOT TELL ME, HIS OWN BROTHER, A SINGLE WORD OF IT. NO, HE'D RATHER TALK TO HIS PAL YAMAZAKI.
I GUESS I'M JUST NOT TRUST-WORTHY ENOUGH. IS THAT IT?
Sniff...

WELL, TAKE A LOOK AT TETSU.
HE'S YOUNGER THAN THE OTHERS, BUT HE'S STILL 16, RIGHT?
HE MIGHT LOOK LIKE A BOY, BUT HE'S A FULL-FLEDGED MAN, CAPABLE OF STANDING ON HIS OWN.
THAT'S JUST THE TIME IN A PERSON'S LIFE...
...WHEN THEY'D RATHER INTERNALIZE WORRY THAN SHARE IT WITH EVERYONE ELSE.
.....
IF HE REALLY DOESN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, WHY NOT LET HIM BE?
DON'T ABANDON HIM. JUST STAND BACK AND OBSERVE.
.....
HIS REBELLI-OUS PHASE, YOU MEAN?
UH, NOT QUITE.

.....
TECHNI-CALLY...
...I DO KNOW ALL OF THIS STUFF.
BUT EVERY DAY, SOME-ONE DIES, WHETHER FRIEND OR FOE.
WE CAN'T GET USED TO IT, AND WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO CRY IT OUT.
WE'LL ALL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THAT PROCESS.
HE'S STARTED SMILING AND LAUGHING AGAIN.
LOOK AT HOW BAD HEISUKE WAS DOING.
IT'S LIKE...
...WE'RE ALL FORCING OURSELVES TO SMILE.

THAT FELLA SURE DOES DOWN HIS LIQUOR.
I'LL GIVE YA A DISCOUNT.
HA HA HA, THANKS.
Tweet Tweet...
AHHH...
SPRING ALREADY!
THANKS FOR COMING!
.....
I CAN FEEL THE BUZZ WEARING ... OFF ...
WHAT A GREAT BREEZE ...
That was fast!
WOW, SOBER ALREADY?!
DON'T LET IT BOTHER YOU! WE GOT PLENTY OF ENTERTAIN-MENT OUT OF IT!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
I'm so humiliated, I could kill myself...
And you said you'd owe us one.

WELL, TIME TO DO OUR ROUNDS.
BACK TO BASE!
I-I THINK I NEED TO FRESHEN UP A BIT MORE BEFORE I RETURN...
CHIRP.
CHIRRUP CHIRP.
IF ONLY I HAD SOME SKILL...
...I COULD HAVE EARNED US SOME MONEY OR RICE.
INSTEAD...
...I'M PRETTY MUCH JUST DEAD USELESS...

!!
AAAAHH!
IT'S A FIRE!!
.....!
SOMEONE, CALL THE FIREFIGHTERS!
IT'S OVER IN GION!

A FIRE? SO WHAT.
FIRES HAPPEN EVERY DAY.
THERE'S THAT BAD HABIT AGAIN, OF RUNNING UP TO SEE...

AAH... GHH...
...NG!

HUFF.
HUFF.
...TO GET OVER THIS FOR HIMSELF.
TETSU'S ALREADY MANAGED...
HUFF...
URGH...
...URG!
WHAT THE HELL AM I DOING WITH MYSELF?

WHAA --?!
WHAT'S ALL THIS?!
HO! ☆
BLONK
FLUMP
THANK YOU VERY...
DIDN'T HEAR YOU THERE.
OH!
WHO THE HELL DECIDED ...
...TO TOSS THEIR JUNK IN A PLACE LIKE...

もく…
OOPS! DIDN'T KNOW SOMEONE WAS DOWN HERE!
もくもく
MY BAD, MY BAD!
……
……
AAAAAGH!
Rraarrgh
DRAGON BOOOOY!!!

UHHR...
feel sick...
LIKE GOD'S SENDING ME A MESSAGE. "DON'T YOU DARE RELAX!"
AND WHAT HAPPENS? A FIRE.
I WAS TAKING MY FIRST BATH IN A DECADE...
I AM A MEMBER OF THE SHINSENGUMI, WHO ARE EAGER TO ARREST YOU.
YOU SEEM PRETTY RELAXED RIGHT NOW.
WHERE'S ALL YOUR VIGOR? HUH? YOUR PEP?
WHY, THERE'S NOTHING ARRESTING ABOUT YOU!
HUH? BIG WORDS FROM AN UNARMED WEAKLING.

ACK!
WHY AM I RUNNING, TOO?!
I'M NOT PART OF HIS...
HEY, PARDNER!!
LET'S YOU AN' ME FIGURE A WAY OUTTA THIS MESS. ☆
Aaaahh!
BASTARD!!
wait, you!
OH
IT'S
SAKA-MOTO
Let's beat it!
RYO-MA!!!
SEIZE HIM!!

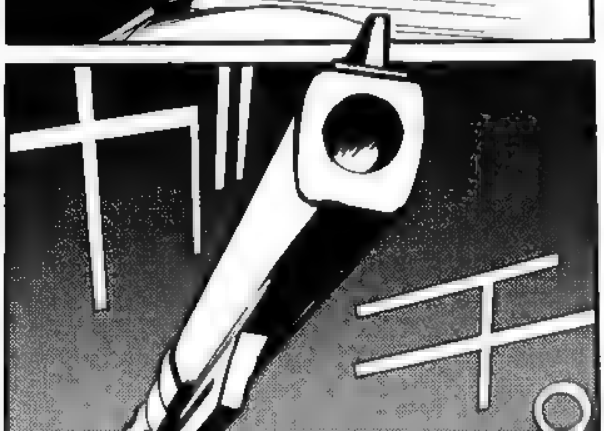
WHOA!
WE'RE ON A HILL!!
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE SURROUNDED, SAKAMOTO-SAN!
GREAT!
WELL, DAMN! HOW'D THESE GUYS GET SO CLEVER?!

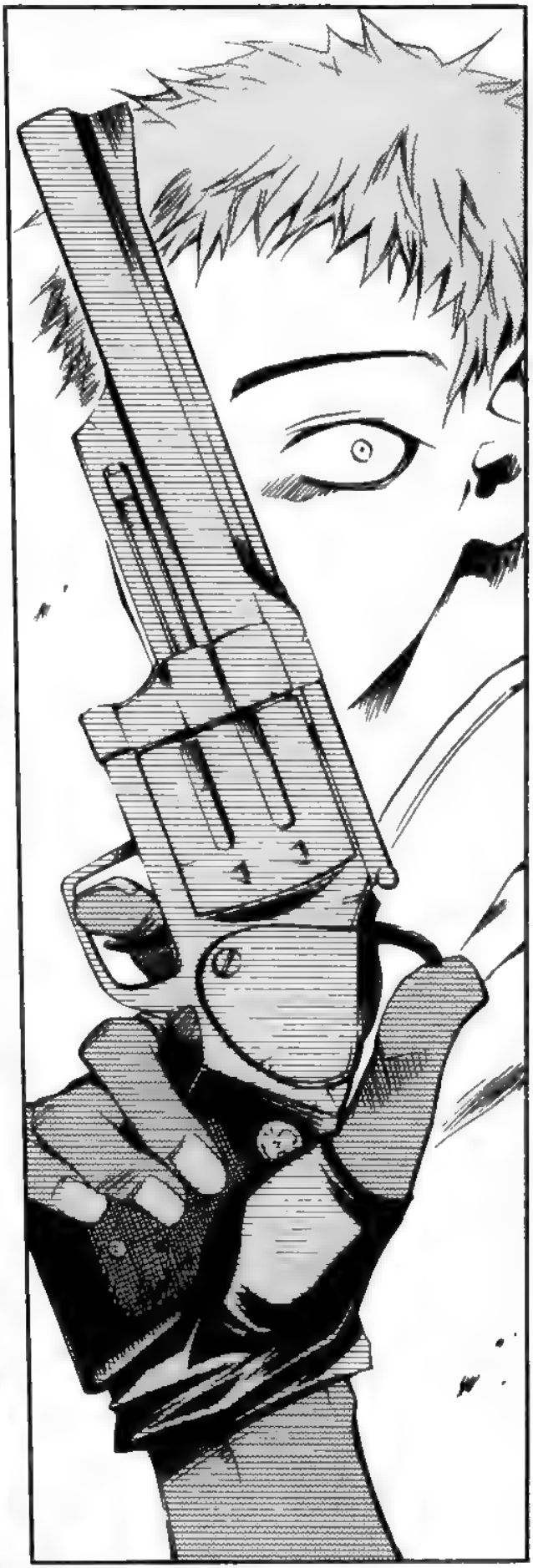
I KNOW THAT YOU'RE POWERFUL...
GULP
...BUT HOW DO YOU INTEND TO FIGHT OFF THIS MANY PEOPLE?
TIME TO FIGHT.
OH WELL...
...I ONLY NEED ONE TOOL.
AGAINST MEN LIKE THESE...
WHAAAAAT?!
YOU AIN'T NO HELP WITHOUT A WEAPON.
FIRST STEP: GIVE THIS TO YOU.

RA
AHH

DRAGON BOY!
RUN TO THAT CART!!

UH...
RIGHT!!



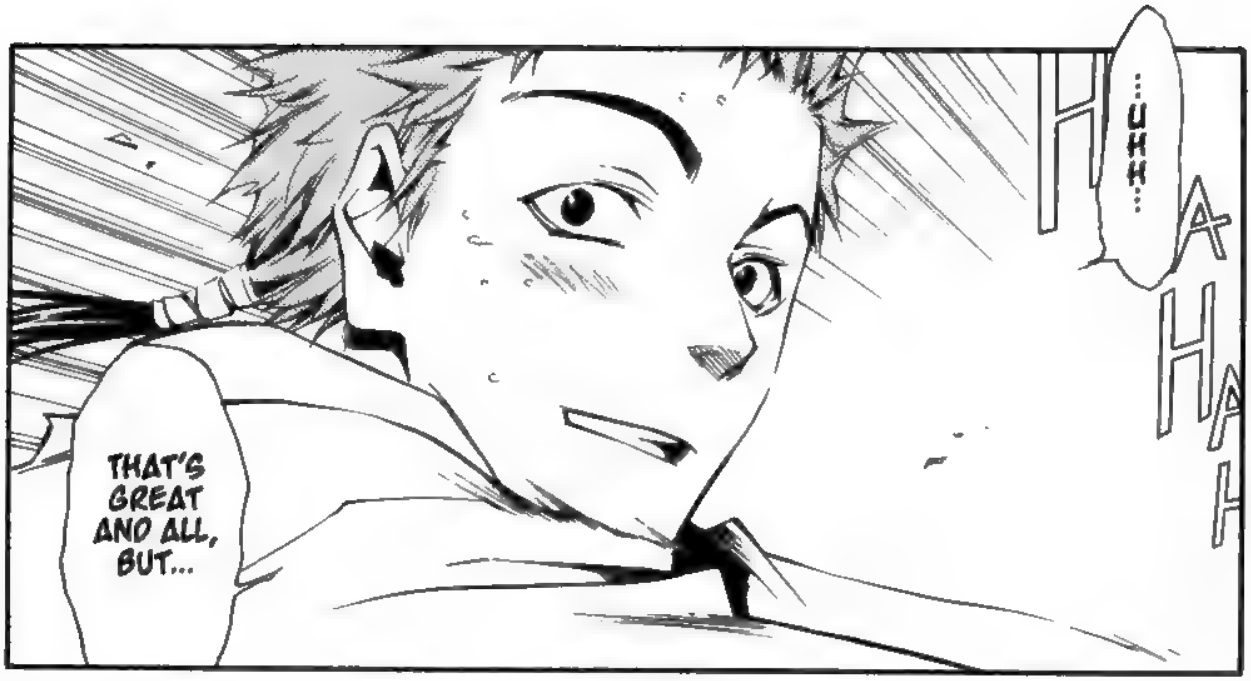


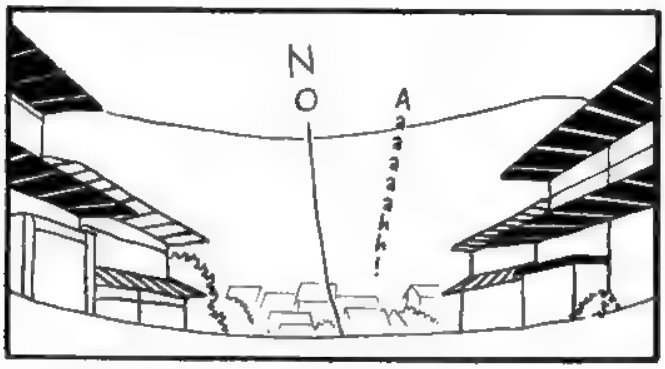
BLAH!
Blam
Blam
Leeek.
KLUNK
AAH! IT'S MOVI--
AAAH!!

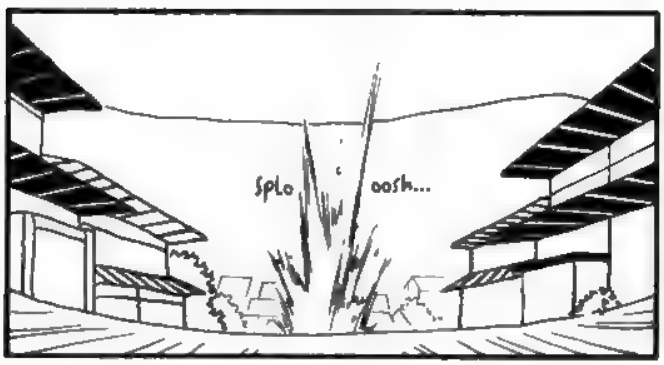
DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
STRIKE HIM DOWN!
Yeeeeek!!

Blam
Blam!
Brhuu
Brhuu
Daaahh!!

SAKAMOTO-GAN!
GET ON, QUICK! I'M ABOUT TO...
KCHINGG★
GA HA HA HA!
DON'T WORRY, SON!
HAHAHA
I'VE LEARNED A FEW TRICKS RUNNIN' FOR MY LIFE ALL OVER THE COUNTRY!!


HA HA H
...UHH...
THAT'S GREAT AND ALL, BUT...


NO
Aaaaaaah!


Splo
oosh...

HOW DID YOU PLAN ON STOPPING THIS THING?!

I FEEL LIKE MY HEART STOPPED FOR A MOMENT, WHEN WE FELL IN THE WATER...
WELL, WELL, WELL...
GOOD THING WE WERE HEADIN' STRAIGHT FOR THAT RIVER...
Sigh...
DON'T WANT TO WIND UP DEAD BECAUSE SOMEBODY THINKS I'M WITH YOU...
AS SOON AS I GET WARM, I'M LEAVING.
Oh yeah?
THERE IS NO LAW ENFORCE-MENT ALIVE THAT WOULD CUT DOWN AN UNARMED CIVILIAN WITHOUT WARNING.
REMEMBER, YA CAN'T PROTECT YOURSELF WITHOUT THE PROPER ARMAMENTS!
WELL, I WAS RIGHT IN LETTIN' YOU HOLD MY SWORD.
Don't need any extra.
I GET QUITE ENOUGH THRILLS EVERY DAY OF MY LIFE.
AWW, C'MON! SOMETIMES A LIL' THRILL IS JUST WHAT IT TAKES TO REMEMBER YOU'RE ALIVE!

SHE MIGHT LOOK STRONG, BUT SHE'S A DELICATE LADY, I TELL YA.
?
OOPS! NEARLY FORGOT TO GET THE WATER OUTTA THIS GIRL...
BASTARD...
EXCUSE ME? MIGHTY COLD WAY TO TREAT YOUR HERO.
BU
BU
POWDER'S PROBABLY WORTH-LESS NOW.
GOTTA REFILL AGAIN...
NO
JUST WHAT I NEED. MORE EX-PENSES!

SAKA-
MOTO-
SAN.
CAN
YOU TELL
ME...
...WHERE
I CAN
GET A
PISTOL
LIKE
THAT?
KUHIZU
「。「。...

Chapter 145
第拾四話
銃
Gun
じゅう

TELL ME...
...WHERE DO YOU GET SOMETHING LIKE THIS?
IT WAS A PRESENT FROM A FELLA NAMED TAKASUGI.
LOOK...
...I DIDN'T BUY THIS.
OR IS THERE SOME BACKDOOR ROUTE TO PROCURING SUCH A WEAPON?
AT DEJIMA IN NAGASAKI OR SOME OTHER STORE FOR FOREIGNERS?

...YOU SAID YOU'D HAVE TO REFILL ITS BULLETS "AGAIN."
BUT EARLIER ...
.....
YA DON'T FIND ITEMS LIKE THIS IN JAPAN.
NORMAL FOLKS DON'T JUST STUMBLE ACROSS 'EM.
.....
I KEPT TELLING MYSELF, "YOU'RE NOT CUT OUT FOR SOME-THING LIKE THAT."
BUT STILL ...
...I JUST COULDN'T GIVE UP ON IT.
WELL, WELL! ALL DRY YET? I THINK SO!
TO TELL THE TRUTH, FROM THE MOMENT I FIRST MET YOU...
...I'VE BEEN WON-DERING ABOUT THIS.

LISTEN TO MY REQUEST.
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO SELL ME A PISTOL!
I PROMISE YOU! I WILL NOT USE IT FOR EVIL!

HEY, YOU.
HOW GOOD ARE YOU WITH THE SWORD?

...HUH?
UHH...
THE SWORD?

I CAN... WELL, NO, I CAN'T REALLY USE IT AT ALL...
AS FOR ME...
...I WAS MADE A FULLY-FLEDGED PRACTITIONER OF THE HOKUSHIN ITTO SCHOOL.
IS HE BRAGGING?
YOU'LL FIND THAT I CAN LICK ANY OL' SWASHBUCKLER IN THIS PLACE.
Rrrg.
BUT IT TAKES A LOT OF EFFORT AND AGONY TO GET TO THE POINT WHERE YOU CAN FIGHT AND KILL ANOTHER MAN WITH YOUR SWORD.

HMM...
...I WAS TALKING ABOUT THE PISTOL...
? ?
I'M GETTIN' TO IT!
Let me finish.
IT AIN'T SOME-THIN' JUST ANY OLD PERSON CAN PULL OFF.
GOTTA HAVE GREATER AGILITY AND COURAGE THAN THE OTHER GUY TO WIN.
YOU GOTTA PUT WORK INTO LEARNING THE ART.
SO HOW DOES A PISTOL COMPARE TO THAT? WELL...
YOU CAN FIRE UP TO SIX BULLETS AT A TIME.
THOSE BULLETS PIERCE THE BODIES OF REMOTE TARGETS TOO QUICKLY TO SEE, LIKE INVISIBLE ARROWS.
HIT A MAN AT THE RIGHT POINT...
...AND HE FALLS DEAD ON THE SPOT, BEFORE HE CAN BLEED OR CRY OUT.

……
TO KILL A MAN...
...ALL IT TAKES IS JUST...
...A LITTLE TWITCH OF THE FINGER.
SET YOUR SIGHT BETWEEN THEIR EYES...
...AND PULL THE TRIGGER.
THAT'S ALL IT TAKES.
…HMM…

I'M NOT EXPECTING TO KILL ANYONE...
TAKIN' THAT ENOR-MOUS POWER ...
...AND USIN' IT CAREFULLY ENOUGH NOT TO KILL IS HARDER 'N YOU MIGHT THINK.
HOW'S A MAN WHO CAN BARELY SWING A SWORD GONNA CONTROL A POWER SO MUCH GREATER?
YOU KNOW THE WHOLE "KILL THEM BEFORE THEY KILL YOU" WAY OF LIVING?
IT AIN'T YOUR STYLE.

WHAT THE HELL WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT ME?
WELL, LOOKY HERE.
SEEMS I GOT A PROBLEM ON MY HANDS.
YOU REALLY NEED A PISTOL THAT BAD?
HAVEN'T I MADE THAT TOTALLY OBVIOUS TO YOU YET?!
THEN HOW COME, DURIN' ALL THIS TIME...

...YOU AIN'T ONCE TRIED TO STEAL IT?

!!!
"THE WELL-PREPARED MAN HAS NO REGRETS..."
...AS THEY SAY.

I'LL SAY IT ONE MORE TIME.
HUFF.
HUFF.
HUFF.
YOU AIN'T MEANT TO BE ON MY SIDE...
...OF THE BARREL.

ONE DAY...
...YOU'RE GONNA FIND YOURSELF POINTING IT AT WHATEVER YOU LOVE MOST.
SLIP
!!
I'LL HAVE THAT BACK, THANKS.

WHEEEW...
Sighhh...
PREACHIN' AIN'T EASY FOR A FELLA WHO DON'T USE HIS MIND MUCH.
.....!
Rrgh...
DON'T TAKE IT HARD, DRAGON BOY.
I GOT A THING FOR THE PEACE-MAKER.
I'M GOING BACK.
.....
I DON'T WANNA SEE HIS SONS LIVE UNHAPPY LIVES.

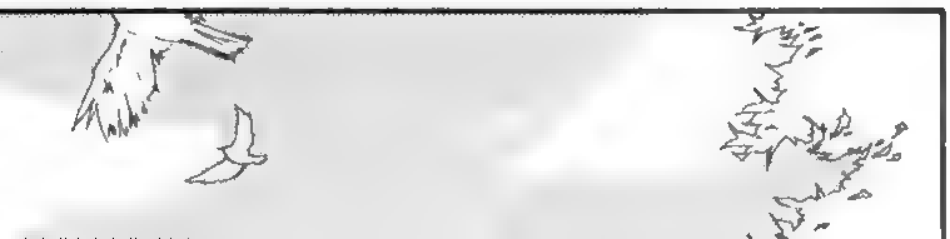
GOOD.
GUESS I'LL TAKE MY LEAVE, TOO.
.....
SAKAMOTO-SAN.
THERE'S JUST ONE THING...
...YOU GOT WRONG ABOUT THIS.

I WILL NEVER POINT A GUN AT TETSU.

GOOD-BYE...

.....

...DRAGON BOY.



Twit twit
Chirpeepee...
THE FIRST YEAR OF THE KEIO PERIOD (1865), MAY.
SHIN-SENGUMI BASE AT NISHI HONGANJI TEMPLE.
Tweet tweet...
.....
Swish
THAK
.....
HEY, SUSUMU...

A LITTLE WHILE AGO, HE WAS SAYING THE EXACT SAME THING ABOUT YOU.
Sigh...
ONE'S PROBLEMS ARE FIXED, AND THE OTHER'S ARE JUST BEGINNING.
Hmph...
.....
YOU THINK TATSUNII'S BEEN ACTING STRANGE?
.....
AWW, HE'S ONLY WITHDRAWING A BIT.
GO AND CHECK UP ON HIM, AND DRAG HIM INTO THE FRESH AIR.
IS THAT WHAT YOU CALL IT? WITHDRAWING?
IT SEEMS MORE LIKE OBSESSION.

Prrip.
Chit chit
Mmmm...
WHA...
WHAT IS IT, TETSU?
HUH? OH, UH...
WHAAA?!
UMM... TATSU-NII?
.....
Mr...

I WAS WONDERING IF YOU'D LIKE TO COME AND GET SOMETHING TO EAT WITH US...
OH, SORRY. YOU TWO ENJOY YOUR-SELVES.
OKAY...
OH, AND BY THE WAY...
HAVE YOU SOLVED THAT PROBLEM YOU WERE HAVING?
HUH?
OH! WELL...
I WOULDN'T SAY... ... "SOLVED," EXACTLY ...
IT'LL BE OKAY.
YOUR BIG BROTHER WILL SORT IT OUT.

YOU'RE GONNA BE OKAY.
TATSU-NII?
Chirp

ARE YOU SERIOUS, SANO? THIS SOUNDS MORE LIKE IT WAS MADE UP SO YOU WOULD LOOK GOOD...
...SO IT TURNS OUT THE WOMAN WHO WAS EXTORTING THE PLACE WAS A MAN, AND HE CAME RIGHT AFTER ME, SO I PARRIED WITH MY SPEAR, LIKE THIS...

...THIS IS THE PLOT OF THE KABUKI PLAY WE SAW LAST WEEK, WORD FOR WORD.
Duh...
GA HA HA HA!
I'M SERIOUS! SO I CHASED HIM DOWN, AND SUDDENLY FOUR OF HIS PALS SHOW UP WITH PAPER UMBRELLAS...

CAPTAIN! CAPTAIN!!
CA...
?

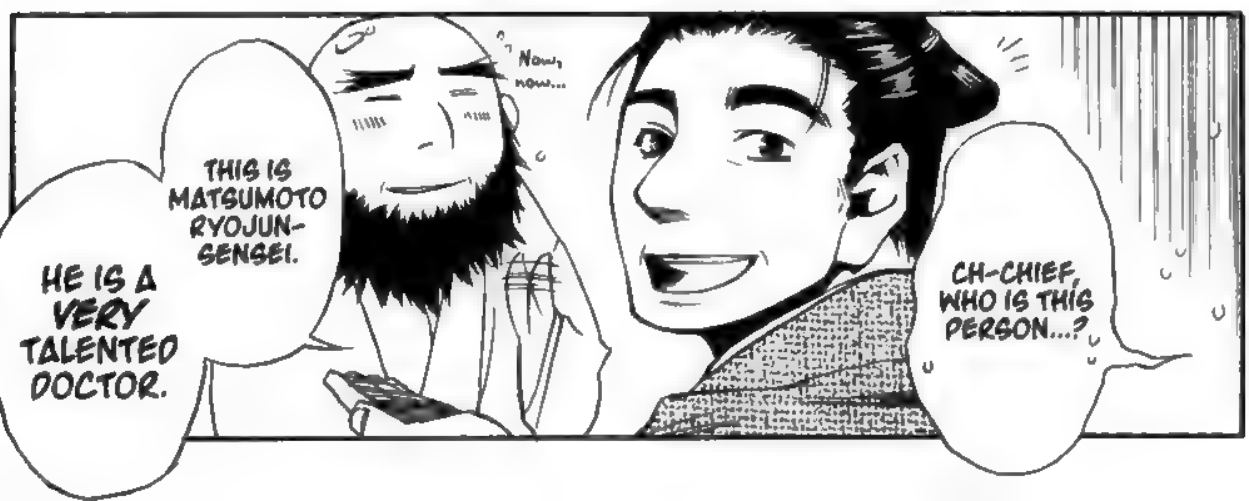
WE'VE GOT A BIG PRO-BLEM!
JUST AROUND THE CORNER...
...THERE'S A BOAR... NO!
A...A BEAR, I MEAN!!
Haaaah?
ABEAAAAAR!!!

YOU KNOW IT WOULD BE WAY MORE FUNNY AND APPRO-PRIATE...
...IF INSTEAD OF A BOAR, IT WAS ANOTHER BEAR...
JOKE-CRUSHER KICK!
HEY! HEY, YOU! HEY, BEAR!
Aaahh...
H-HOW MAY WE HELP YOU, SIR?
WHAT KINDA HAUL IS THAT?! IS THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO?!
S-SANO ?!
.....
How dare you treat an unfamiliar guest that way!!
Aaaahhh!
WHY, SHIN-PACHI?! WHY?!
YOU WANNA WRASSLE?! BRING IT!
NWOH!
HUP!

EAT UP!!
AND YOU, THE SHORT ONE AND SKINNY ONE! YOU BOYS WON'T BE ANY GOOD IN A BATTLE UNLESS YOU GET SOME HEARTY FOOD IN YOU!
Ga ha ha!!
YOU'RE A BIG FELLA, AREN'T YA? JUST LIKE ME. GUYS LIKE US, WE NEED ALL THE FOOD WE CAN GET!
WOULD YOU CALL KONDOU-DONO FOR ME?
HUH? THE CHIEF?!
WE HAVE A MOST BENEVOLENT AND HONORED GUEST IN OUR MIDST!
BRING OUT A BIG-ASS POT AND SOME DAMN FIREWOOD, PEOPLE!

Ga ha ha ha ha!!
A BOAR HAPPENED ACROSS MY PATH AT THE PRECISE MOMENT I WAS HAVING TROUBLE DECIDING ON A GIFT!
I APOLOGIZE FOR MY APPEAR-ANCE!
O O O H!
WELL, WELL! MATSUMOTO-SENSEI!!
YOUR VISIT IS MOST APPRECIATED!

Peace...
I SEE! SO YOU FELLOWS ARE PART OF THE GROUP!
MATSUMOTO-DONO, THESE MEN ARE, FROM YOUR RIGHT, NAGAKURA SHINPACHI, TOUDOU HEISUKE AND HARADA SANOSUKE.
UMM...?


HE IS A VERY TALENTED DOCTOR.
THIS IS MATSUMOTO RYOJUN-SENSEI.
Now, now...
CH-CHIEF, WHO IS THIS PERSON...?

A DOCTOR WHO ICES BOARS WITH HIS BARE HANDS!!
PLEASE, SENSEI! COME RIGHT IN!
はぁ〜
NO, NO, DON'T LET IT TROUBLE YOU.
キュ
キュ
I'M VERY SORRY TO ADMIT THAT OUR BASE DOES NOT HAVE A BATH FOR YOU TO USE...
THIS USE OF A TEMPLE AS A BASE IS SO NOVEL... MIGHT I HAVE A LOOK AROUND?
OF COURSE! PLEASE, MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!
IT WAS I WHO INSISTED ON GETTING DIRTY!
MATSUMOTO RYOJUN (1832-1907)
BORN TO A DOCTOR IN EDO, HE WAS FOSTERED INTO THE MATSUMOTO FAMILY, PERSONAL DOCTORS TO THE SHOGUN, WHERE HE CHANGED HIS NAME TO MATSUMOTO RYOJUN. HE STUDIED WESTERN MEDICINE IN NAGASAKI AND LATER WORKED AS HEAD OF THE SHOGUNATE'S MEDICAL OFFICE.

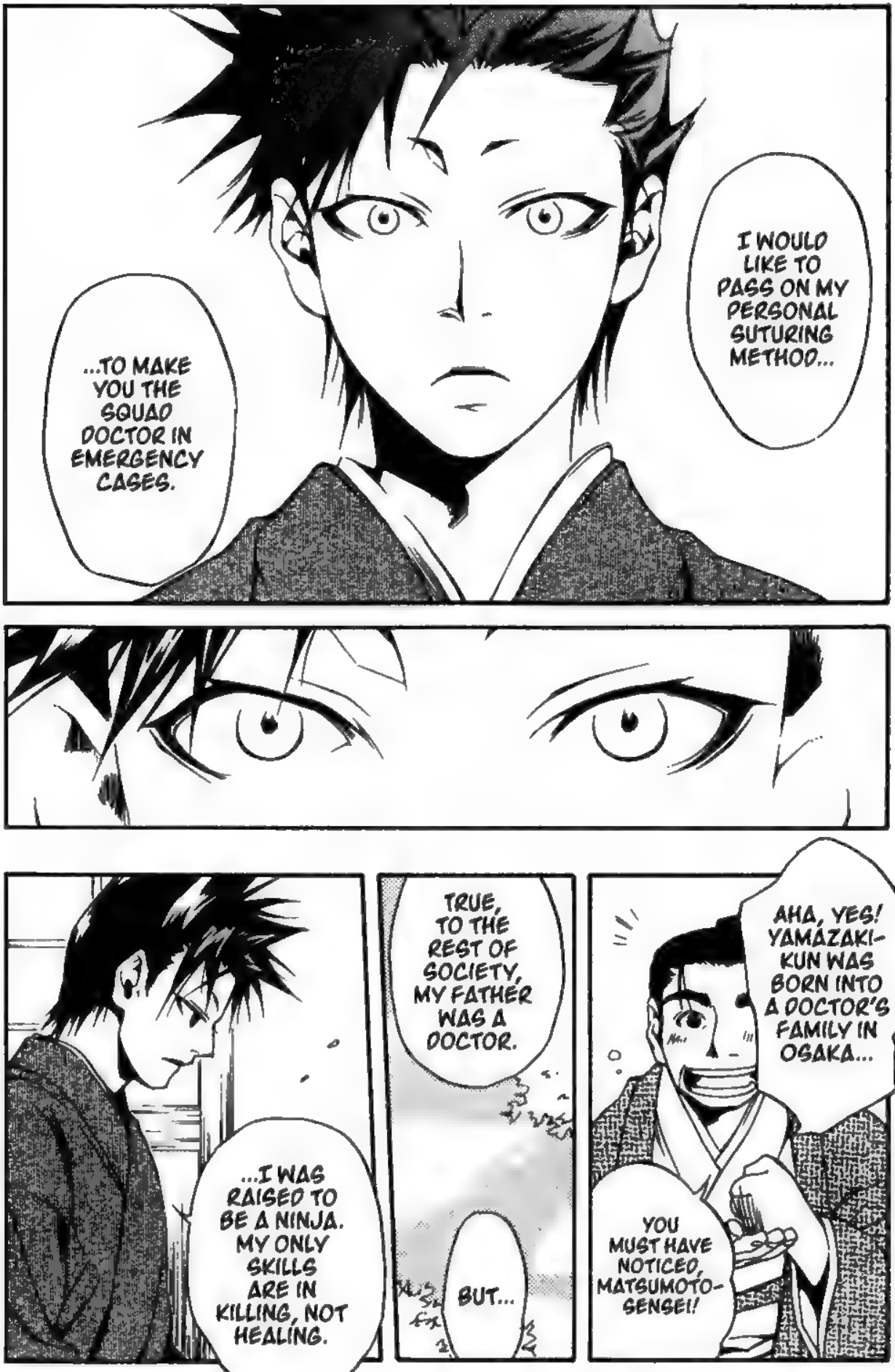
HEY, MURAKAMI! WAKE UP!
AAAH!! WHAT'S THE MATTER, CHIEF?!
チラ
JUST OBSERVING! PLEASE, CONTINUE!
NO, NO! PARDON ME, FELLOWS!
IS THERE A MISSION FOR US?!
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
DAAAAH!
OOPS, THE LAVA-TORY.
OOPS, PARDON ME!
WHOA! WHO ARE YOU?
OOPS, PARDON ME!
AAAH! WHO GOES THERE?!
HMM?
...THIS IS A VERY RIGOROUS OBSERVA-TION...
IT WOULD SEEM...

IT'S INTENDED TO BE A TARGET FOR THROWN WEAPONS.
THIS BELONGS TO YAMAZAKI, ONE OF OUR INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS.
AHH, THIS?
DO YOU THINK HE MIGHT BE BROUGHT HERE? TO SPEAK WITH US?
KONDOU-DONO...
CHIT CHIT CHIT ...
CHIR-REEP!
I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS.

PARDON? IN NUMBER?
HOW MANY DOES THE SHINSENGUMI ENCOMPASS?
KONDOU-DONO!
.....
Hrmmm...
.....
WELL, I BELIEVE IT'S CURRENTLY... ABOUT A HUNDRED AND FORTY.
Hoo.
...OF THE MEN IN THEIR ROOMS...
FROM WHAT I OBSERVED...
?
?
THIRTY PERCENT.

ROUGHLY THIRTY PERCENT, ABOUT FORTY MEN, ARE INJURED...
...OR SUFFERING FROM SOME KIND OF ILLNESS THAT PREVENTS THEM FROM ACTIVITY.
I WANTED YOU TO SEE THOSE MEN.
PLEASE GIVE US YOUR HELP, MATSUMOTO-SENSEI!
FORGIVE ME FOR MISLEADING YOU.
THEY'RE IN SUCH A STATE, I COULDN'T IGNORE THEM IF I TRIED.
IN ADDITION TO SIMPLE ROUTINE EXAMINATIONS, HERE ARE SEVERAL FEATURES OF THIS BASE I WOULD SEE IMPROVED.

I SHALL SEND MY ASSISTANT NANBU HERE EVERY MORNING TO CHECK AND ADMINISTER MEDICINES.
I MYSELF WILL VISIT A FEW TIMES A WEEK.
INSTALL A BATHING AREA, AND COMMAND THAT ALL MEMBERS MAINTAIN CLEANLINESS.
PLACE TWO OR THREE MEN IN ATTENDANCE THERE AT ALL TIMES.
INSTALL A SICKROOM WITH AMPLE SUNLIGHT AND FRESH AIR. PUT THE SICK AND INJURED ON CLEAN FUTONS.
...AND ONE MORE THING.
AHEM.
TH-THANK YOU, SIR! THANK YOU!
EVEN WITH NANBU AND ME WORKING HERE REGULARLY, THESE ARE TOO MANY MEN TO HANDLE.
HERE IS MY PROPOSAL.
YES, SIR.
YAMAZAKI-KUN, WAS IT?


I WOULD LIKE TO PASS ON MY PERSONAL SUTURING METHOD...
...TO MAKE YOU THE SQUAD DOCTOR IN EMERGENCY CASES.
AHA, YES! YAMAZAKI-KUN WAS BORN INTO A DOCTOR'S FAMILY IN OSAKA...
YOU MUST HAVE NOTICED, MATSUMOTO-SENSEI!
TRUE, TO THE REST OF SOCIETY, MY FATHER WAS A DOCTOR.
BUT...
...I WAS RAISED TO BE A NINJA. MY ONLY SKILLS ARE IN KILLING, NOT HEALING.

...I SPOTTED THE DUMMY WITH DAGGERS IN ITS VITAL ORGANS.
TUNK
OUT IN THE COMMONS...
WHETHER YOUR FATHER WAS DOCTOR OR NINJA IS OF NO DIFFERENCE TO ME.
HUH?!
WHEN I SAW THAT, I DECIDED ON YOU, YOUNG MAN.
...THEN YOU WILL ALSO KNOW WHERE TO APPLY PRESSURE WHEN BLOOD IS POURING OUT OF A WOUND.
IF YOU KNOW THE VEINS THAT SPREAD POISON QUICKEST...
WITH KNOWLEDGE OF VITAL ORGANS COMES THE ABILITY TO DETERMINE WHICH OF TWO INJURED MEN IS THE CLOSER TO DEATH.
THAT DISCRIMINATION WILL MAKE YOU LESS LIKELY TO MAKE A FATAL MISTAKE DURING TREATMENT.

...BE THE FIRST STEP TOWARD UNDER-STANDING HOW BEST TO SAVE HIM. DON'T YOU AGREE?
CON-SIDERING HOW BEST TO KILL A MAN...
...COULD, IN FACT...

第拾五話 病 Chapter 15 Sickness

だいじゅうごわ　びょう

...KRE...
...GUH.
なぜ
なぜ...
PUFU...
Murmur
Murmur
Murmur
HMMM.
IT TICKLES TOO MUCH!!!
I... I CAN'T TAKE IT! BWA HA HA HA!
URK!
GREEK...

SHUT YER TRAP, NIMROD.
WA HA HA! I LOVE TO SEE A FELLOW WITH ENERGY!
I'M TELLING YOU, MY STOMACH DOESN'T HURT ANYMORE!!
Gyaaa ha ha ha ha ha!!
Pimmnch
DOUBT-LESS HE IS FEELING THE ILL EFFECTS OF HIS OVER-EATING TWO DAYS AGO.
MASTER, I ASSURE YOU THAT HE IS NOT SICK.
CHILD? TRY 16 YEARS OLD!
DON'T WORRY; I ALWAYS GIVE CHILDREN THIS TEST. THEY LOVE IT!
"ICHIMURA TETSUNOSUKE: THE VERY PICTURE OF GOOD HEALTH."
Bwaaa ha ha ha ha ha! Da ha ha ha ha!
Help-I'm dying!
Tickle tickle
.....
THAT SOUNDS SO RIDICULOUS COMING OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!
Pfft
HEH HEH! YOU CALL HIM MASTER ALREADY?!

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO MASTER THEM?
SAY, MATSUMOTO-SENSEI!...
ABOUT THESE MEDICAL SKILLS OF YOURS...
WELL, IT WOULD DEPEND UPON THE APTITUDE OF THE STUDENT, FIRST AND FOREMOST.
BUT IN THE CASE OF FAST LEARNERS LIKE NANBU HERE...
...ONE COULD BE A DOCTOR IN AS FEW AS THREE YEARS.
WHAAAAT?!
YOU MEAN SUSUMU AIN'T GONNA BE BACK FOR THREE WHOLE YEARS?!
BOOOOOO!.
I'LL BE BACK HERE TWO OR THREE TIMES A WEEK, OUNCE.
GA HA HA HA! NO NEED TO WORRY.
I WILL ONLY BE TEACHING YAMAZAKI HANDS-ON EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR USE IN THE FIELD.

.....
HE STAYS UP NIGHTS STUDYING, ALL ON HIS OWN. HE MAY FINISH BEFORE THE YEAR IS OUT.
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY...
...IN CONTRAST TO HIS LOOKS, HE HAS QUITE THE FIERY PERSONALITY WITHIN.
!!
?
WHY IS YOUR FACE RED, YAMAZAKI? DO YOU HAVE A FEVER?
NO, SIR.
Chirp...
NEXT PATIENT!
.....
Heh!

Ha-Yaaaaaa!!!
GO AHEAD! CUT ME OPEN, BEAR DOCTOR! DO YOUR WORST!!
ACTUALLY KIND OF SCARED.
"PERFECTLY HEALTHY."
That was fast.
IF YOU CAN CUT YOUR STOMACH OPEN AND NOT DIE, I CAN ASSURE YOU NO DISEASE DARES VENTURE NEAR YOU.
HELL NO, YA GOT THAT RIGHT! I AIN'T MEANT TO DIE ON A SICKBED!

NEXT PATIENT!

HMM... IF ANYTHING, I'D SAY I MIGHT BE SHORT ON SLEEP.
I'VE BEEN HAVING TROUBLE FALLING INTO BED AT NIGHT.
I FIND MY MIND WANDERING. I WORRY.
TOO MANY THOUGHTS CAN POISON THE MIND, MY FRIEND.
TAKE A LESSON FROM HARADA ON THIS ONE.
AHA HA, YOU SAID IT, DOC!
sighhh

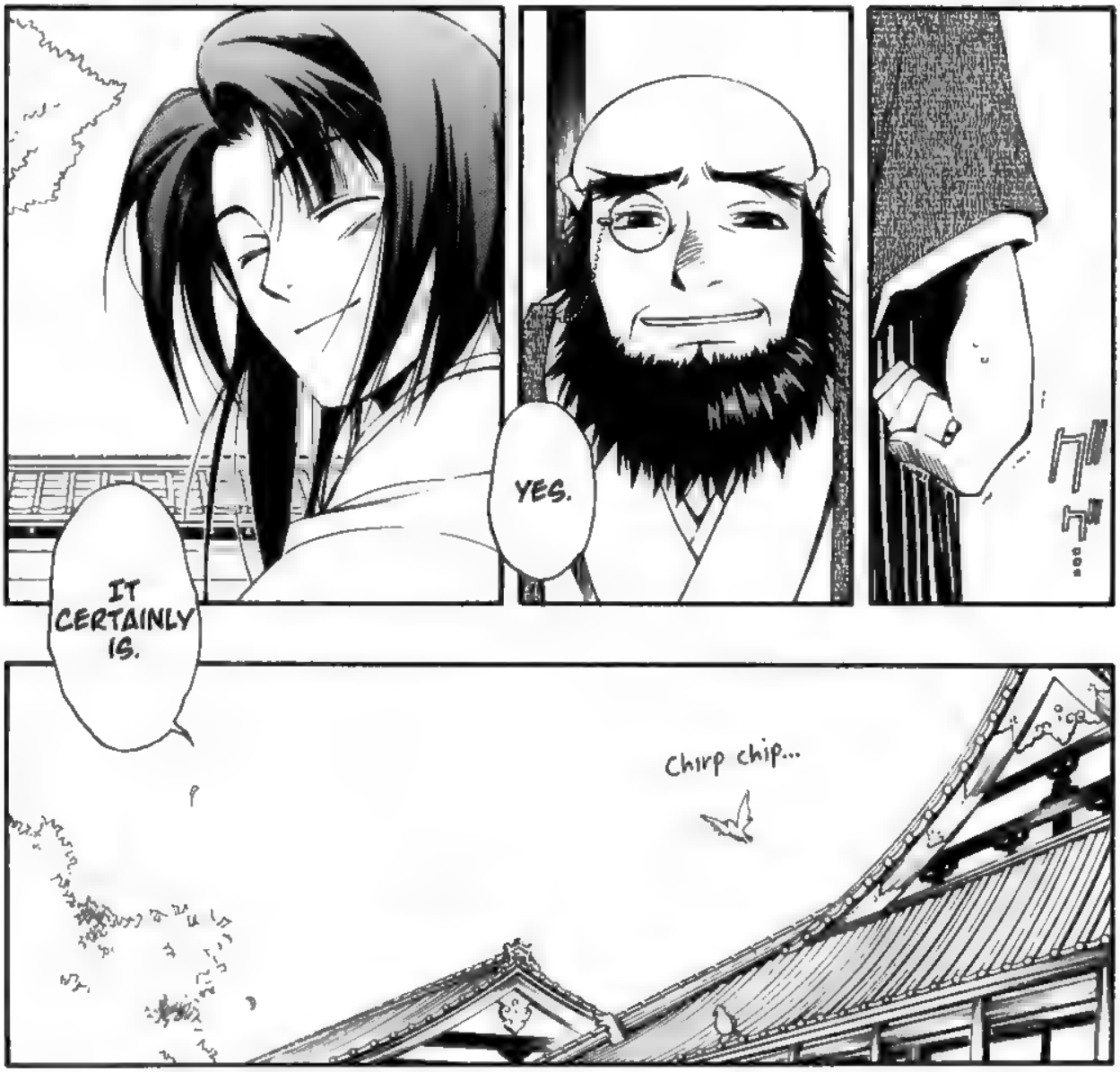
NEXT PATIENT...

I NEVER FEEL MOTIVATED TO DO ANY-THING...
WELL, THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH YOU PHYSICALLY.
IT MUST BE A MENTAL ISSUE YOU ARE HAVING.
I DUNNO, I FIND MYSELF BEIN' KINDA TIRED AND LAZY.
ALL THE TIME.
ANY IDEAS ON WHAT THAT COULD BE?
.....
.....
I AM SURP-RISED TO FIND...
KICK KICK
...MUCH MORE MENTAL ANGUISH THAN I HAD EXPECTED.

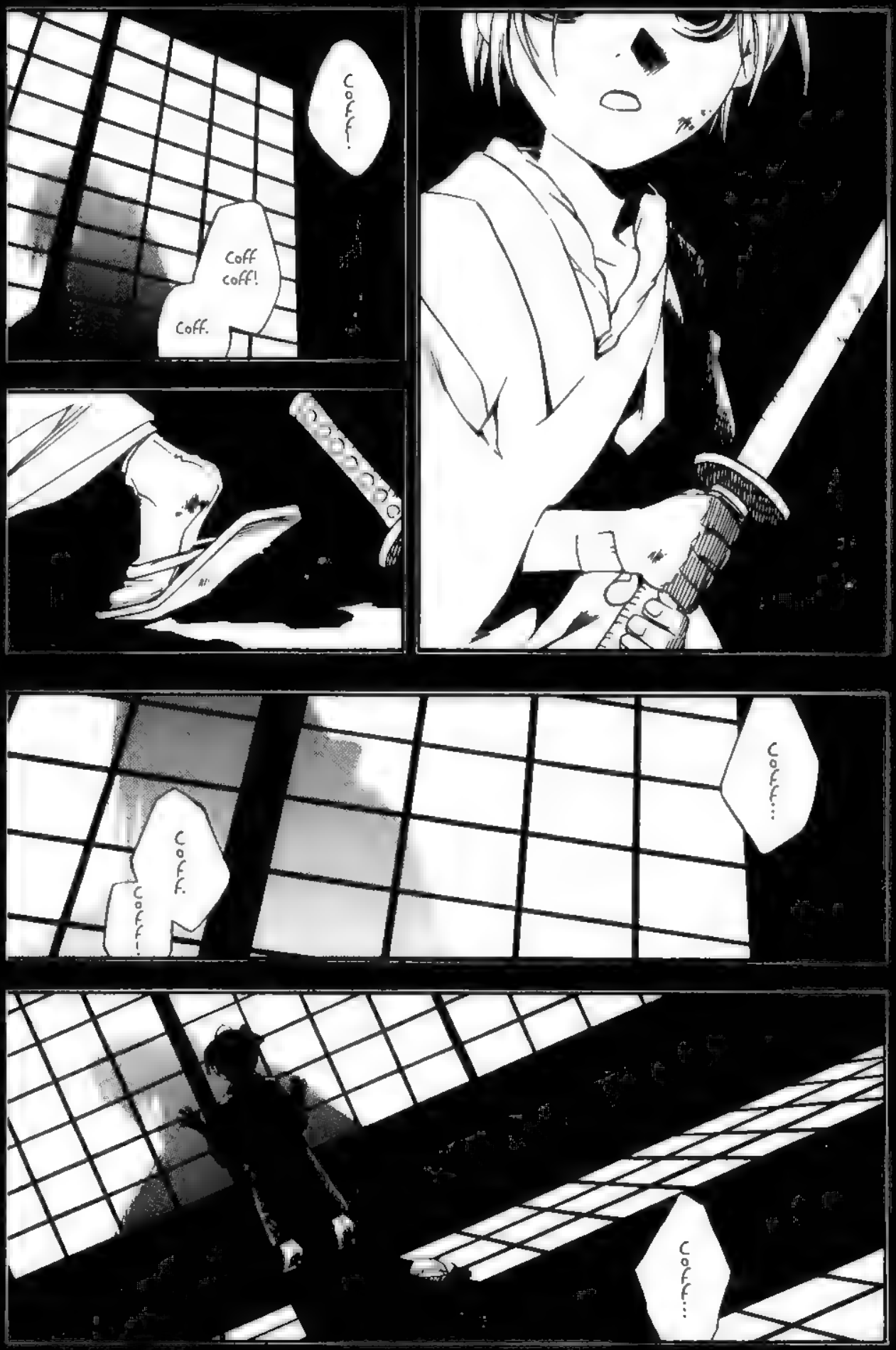
BOINK!
OINK BOINK!
HMMM...
Aaahhh...
AND YOU PRODUCE PHLEGM AS WELL?
THAT'S CORRECT ...
BUT IT ONLY REALLY COMES WHEN THE COUGHING GETS PARTI-CULARLY BAD.
I DON'T FEEL CLOGGED UP AT ALL RIGHT NOW, FOR EXAMPLE.

?
……!
SEE ME AGAIN LATER. WE'LL OBSERVE THE RESULTS.
CERTAINLY!
I'LL MIX YOU UP A FEW DIFFERENT HERBS TO HELP, THOUGH.
WELL, IT DOESN'T SOUND TOO SERIOUS, SO I WON'T MAKE A BIG DEAL OF IT.

ALL DONE!
WHO'S LEFT? ITOU-SAN, HIJIKATA-SAN AND KONDOU-SAN, RIGHT?
CORRECT. WOULD YOU MIND CALLING THEM HERE FOR ME?
NOT AT ALL.
MATSU-MOTO-SENSEI..
YES?
IT'S A HARD JOB...
...BEING A DOCTOR... ISN'T IT?

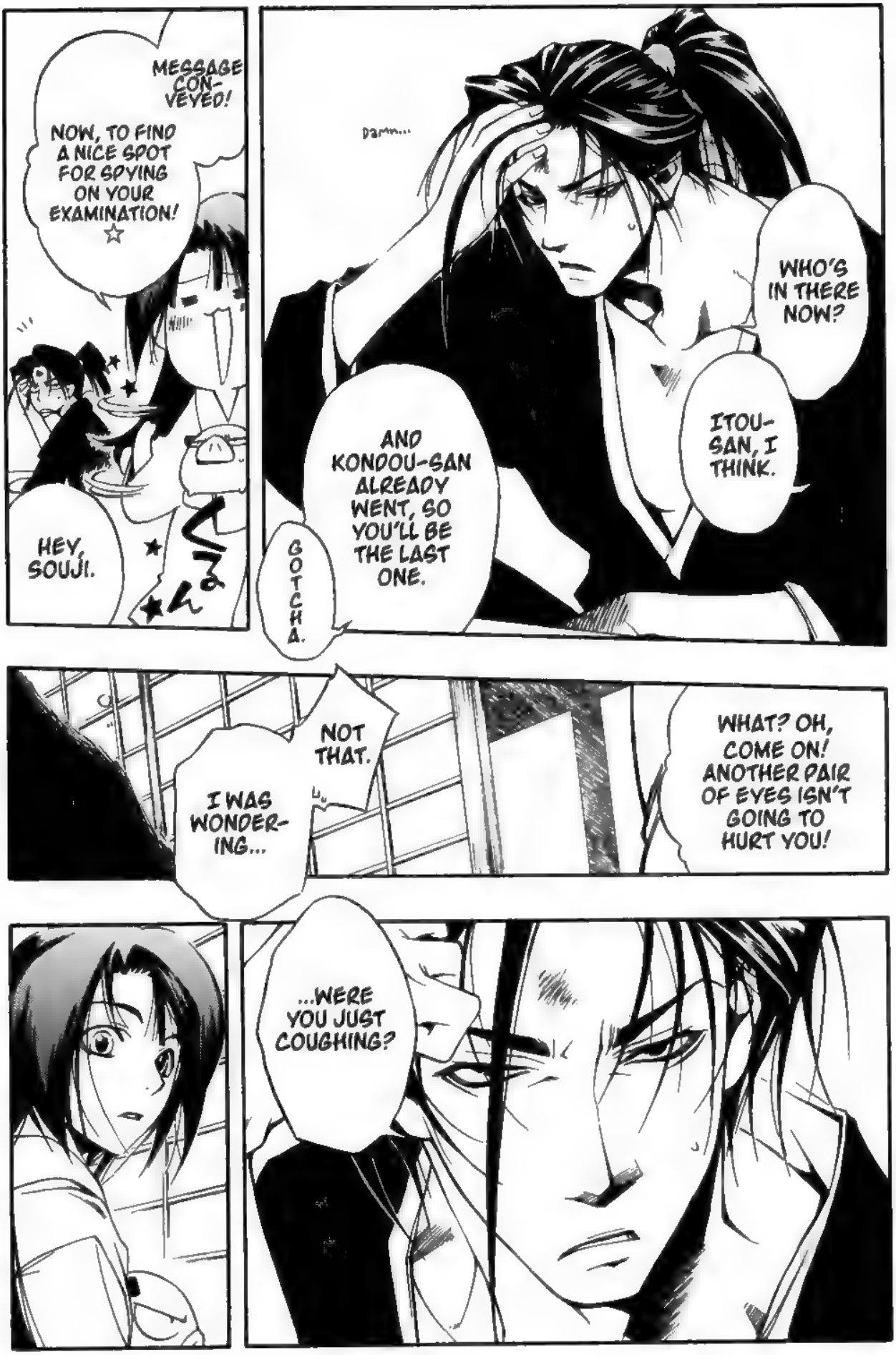

IT CERTAINLY IS.
YES.
Chirp chip...

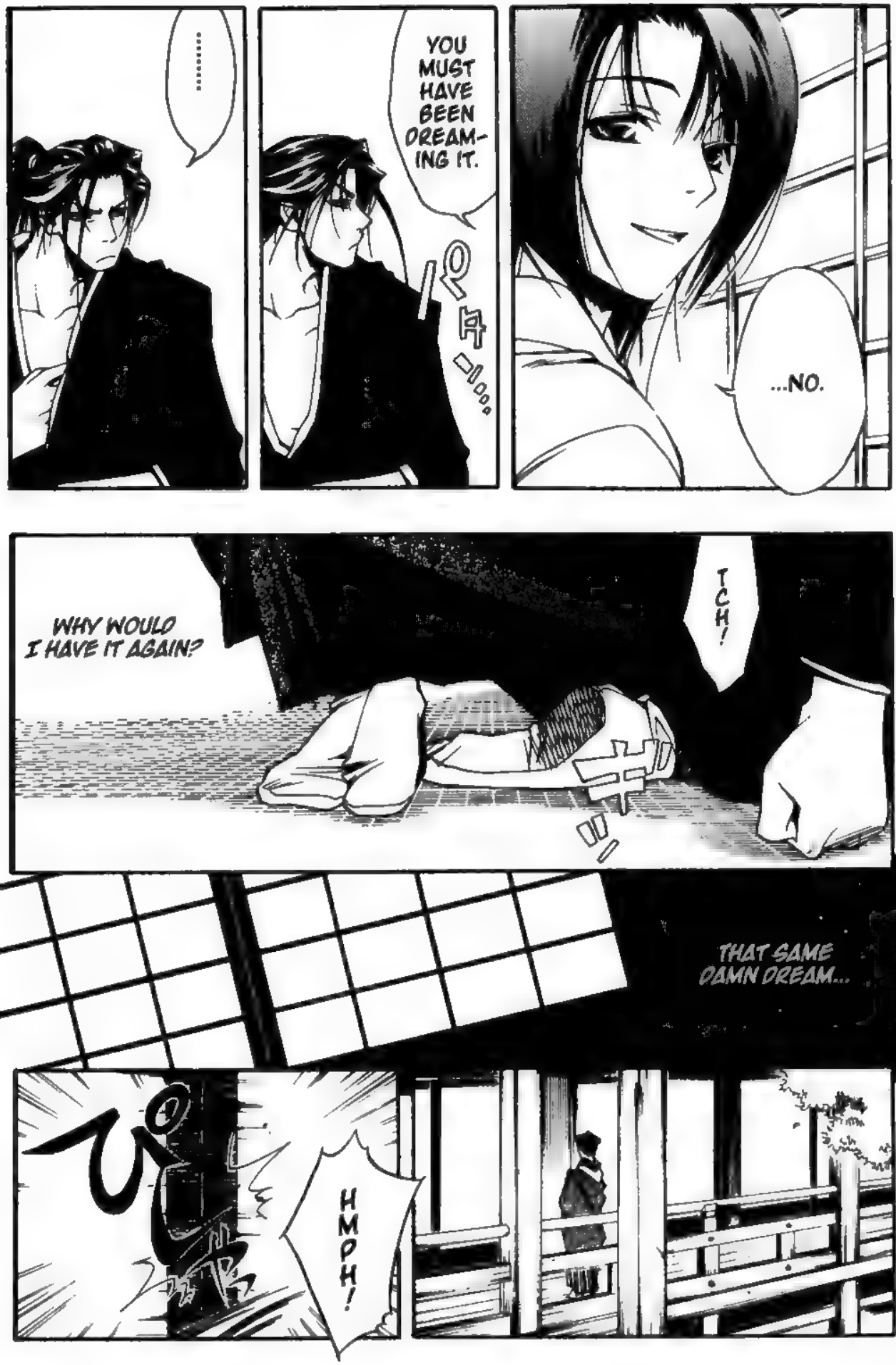
cough...
cough.
cough.


Coff coff!
Coff.

YOU MUSN'T COME IN HERE!
YOU MUSN'T...
...OPEN THAT DOOR.

OH, MY GOOD-NESS.
SLIP
KLOONK!
!
HIJIKATA-SAN? IT'S TIME FOR YOUR PHYSICAL.
Dooh...
.....
...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
D-DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD.
Waaah...
THESE THINGS HAPPEN, WHEN YOU...
DON'T HOLD IT IN. YUK IT UP!
...HEE HEE... WHEN YOU NAP WITH YOUR ELBOWS ON THE TABLE...
Heh heh heh...
Pff heh heh...
TOIL
TOIL
TOIL


MESSAGE CONVEYED!
NOW, TO FIND A NICE SPOT FOR SPYING ON YOUR EXAMINATION!
HEY, SOUJI.
Damn...
WHO'S IN THERE NOW?
ITOU-SAN, I THINK.
AND KONDOU-SAN ALREADY WENT, SO YOU'LL BE THE LAST ONE.
GOTCHA.
WHAT? OH, COME ON! ANOTHER PAIR OF EYES ISN'T GOING TO HURT YOU!
NOT THAT.
I WAS WONDERING...
...WERE YOU JUST COUGHING?


.....
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN DREAM-ING IT.
...NO.
WHY WOULD I HAVE IT AGAIN?
TCH!
THAT SAME DAMN DREAM...
HMPH!

SKREEEEE!!
I CANNOT STAND FOR THIS! WHOSE IDEA WAS IT?!
MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS ARE GOOD AND ALL, BUT WHY MUST THEY COME AT THE HANDS OF THE HIDEOUS?!
IT WAS DISGRACE ENOUGH TO HAVE TO SHOW MY BODY TO THAT BEAST OF A MAN...
Skreee!
WHAT IF HE HAD LEFT A BLEMISH ON MY IMMACULATE SKIN?!
OH!
!
.....

I'M AWARE OF THAT.
...I WAS FORCED TO STRIP FOR MY EXAM. I DIDN'T DO IT WILLINGLY.
JUST SO YOU KNOW...
OH...
I WISHED TO SPEAK TO YOU OF YAMANAMI-SAN.
OH, BUT WAIT! HIJIKATA-DONO, DON'T GO SO FAST!
Ugh...
WHAT IS IT?

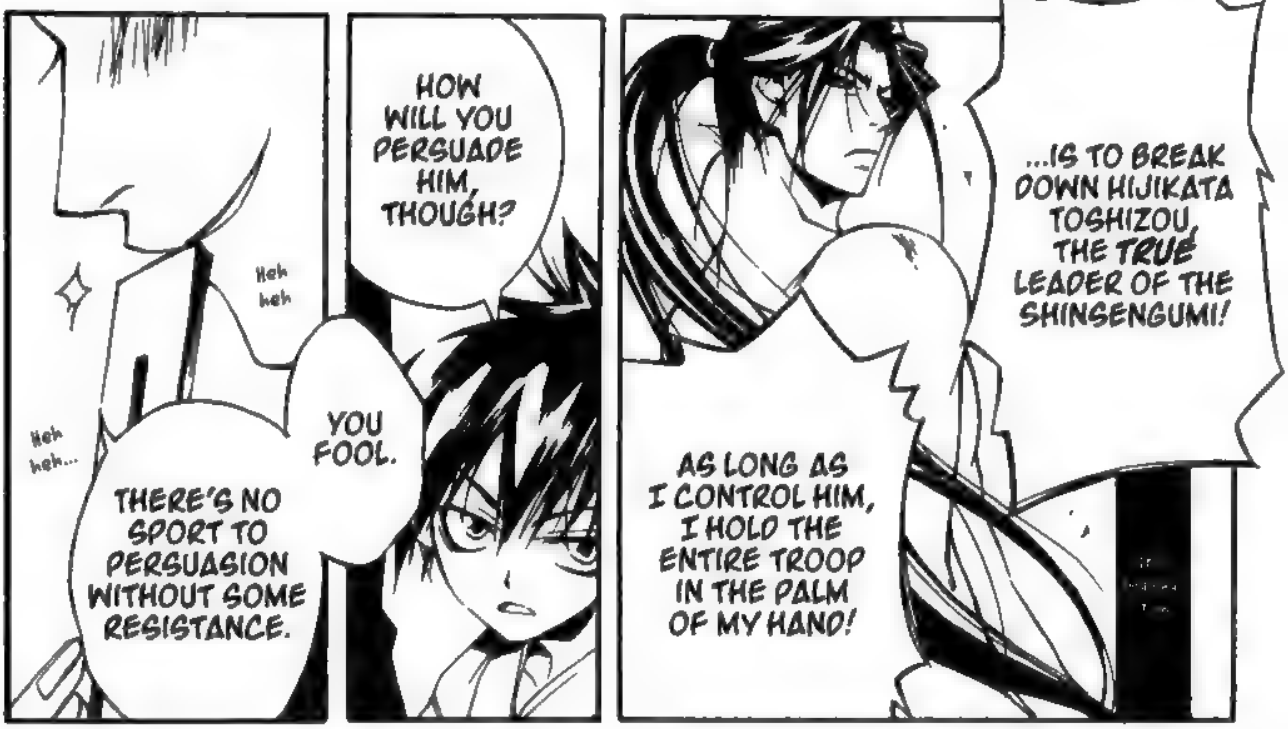
THE NEW MEMBERS I BROUGHT TO THE TROOP SEEM TO BE CURIOUS, AS WELL...
WILL YOU TELL ME ITS LOCATION?
I WISH TO PAY MY RESPECTS AT HIS GRAVE.
I LEFT ON A RECRUITMENT TRIP WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO EVEN SAY MY GOODBYES.
AFTER HIS SEPPUKU, THE BODY WAS IMMEDIATELY INTERRED.
...CERTAINLY.
KOENJI TEMPLE, FAR IN THE BACK.
NO DOUBT HE WILL BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU THERE.
BEST OF LUCK.

Huh...!
WHAT A SWEET-HEART...
SUCH AN OBVIOUS REACTION.
HA HA.
.....
...MUST ALSO INCLUDE A FEW LIES.
THE TRUTH OF YAMANAMI KEISUKE'S DEATH...
SOME TRUTHS ARE GREAT ENOUGH TO SHATTER THE BONDS OF THE SHINSENGUMI.

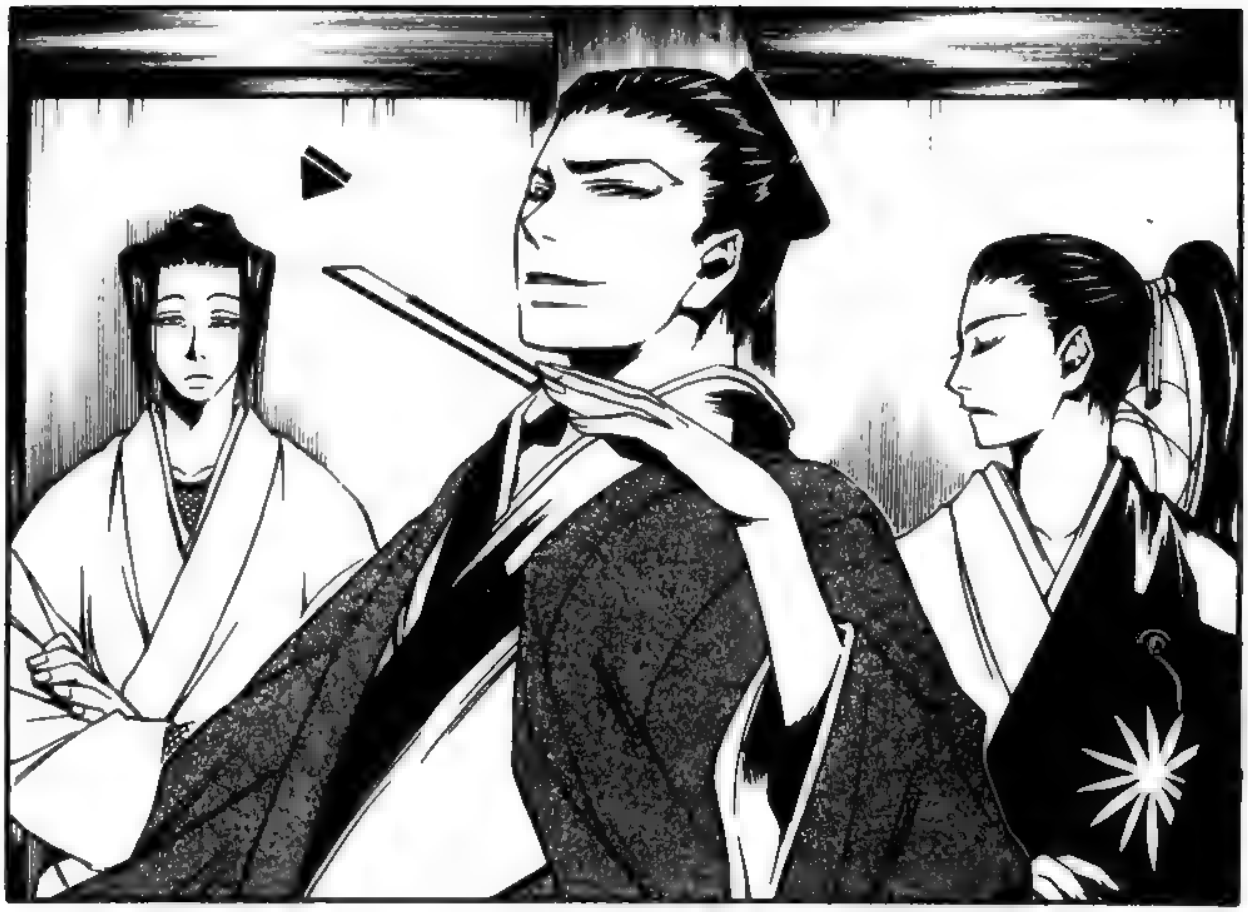
BUT THERE ARE TOO FEW WITNESSES TO KNOW FOR SURE.
IT'S CLEAR THAT IT WAS NO ORDINARY SEPPUKU.
EVEN IF WE DID, THE BODY WOULD BE DECOMPOSED.
THAT WOULD BE POINT-LESS.
WILL WE DIG UP THE GRAVE IN SECRET?
FLIP...
THIS IS OUR CHANCE TO PUT THE PAWNS INTO PLAY.
OF COURSE.
WILL WE BE MOV-ING INTO ACTION?
I SUPPOSE I MUST REQUEST HELP FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES...
WE HAVE NO CHOICE...

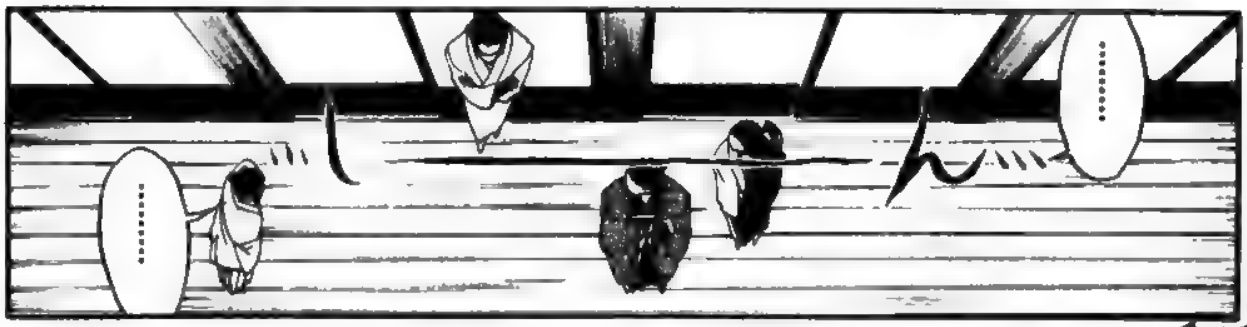
IN ORDER FOR COOPERATION WITH THE FIEFDOMS OF THE WEST TO BLOOM, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE BEND THE SHINSENGUMI TO THE IMPERIAL THRONE.
KONDOU AND HIJIKATA ARE ALIGNED WITH US. WE ARE FOR THE EMPEROR.

AND TO ACHIEVE THAT, THE FIRST THING TO BE DONE...
...BUT IF PROPERLY TRAINED, THEY COULD BE VALUABLE IMPERIALIST WARRIORS.
THEY ARE NOT THE SMARTEST OF PETS...


Heh heh
Heh heh...
THERE'S NO SPORT TO PERSUASION WITHOUT SOME RESISTANCE.
YOU FOOL.
HOW WILL YOU PERSUADE HIM, THOUGH?
AS LONG AS I CONTROL HIM, I HOLD THE ENTIRE TROOP IN THE PALM OF MY HAND!
...IS TO BREAK DOWN HIJIKATA TOSHIZOU, THE TRUE LEADER OF THE SHINSENGUMI!

...HE'S JUST LOOKING TO GET HIS KICKS...
AHHH... JUST IMAGINING IT IS SENDING SHIVERS DOWN MY SPINE...
WHAT PLEASURE... FORCIBLY TAMING THE WILD BEAST!
I'LL SIMPLY FIND HIS WEAKNESS AND TORTURE HIM WITH IT.
Hell of Imagination
AND NOW...
Heh heh heh...
...WE'LL SEE HOW FAR HE CAN RUN.
I'M GOING TO HAVE A LOT OF FUN WITH YOU...
...HIJIKATA TOSHIZOU!!

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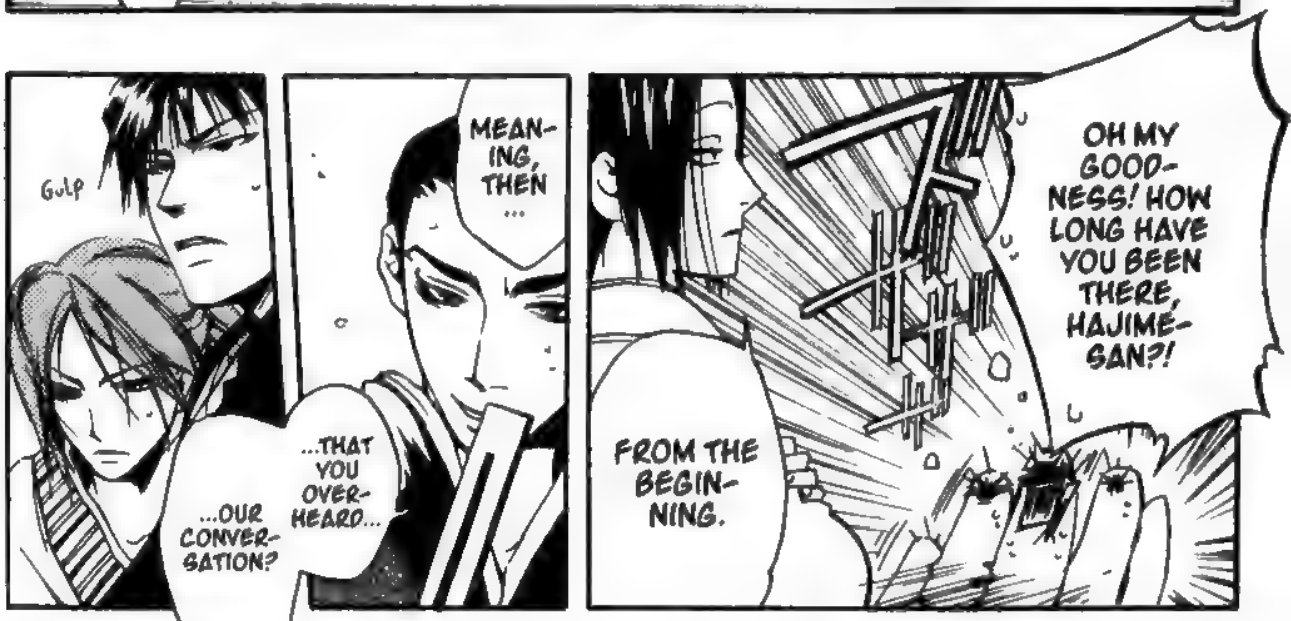

Gulp
...OUR CONVER-SATION?
...THAT YOU OVER-HEARD...
MEAN-ING, THEN ...
FROM THE BEGIN-NING.
OH MY GOOD-NESS! HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE, HAJIME-SAN?!

WELL...
...YES.
UNFORTU-
NATELY.
GWAH!

I HOPE YOU WILL UNDERTAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ENSURING THAT YOUR NEW RECRUITS ARE PROPERLY GROUNDED IN OUR RULES.
"QUARRELS OVER PRIVATE MATTERS ARE FORBIDDEN."
Gulp
ITOU-SENSEI!
.....!
BESIDES...
...I BELIEVE YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE.

I AM ON YOUR SIDE.
.....
Squeee
Oiiimk
Goimk
Cheep cheep

INDEED.
YOU LOOK TO BE IN GOOD HEALTH.
SO.
THE EXAMINATIONS ARE FINISHED.
DOCTOR...
WHAT IS IT?
Chippee cheep
YEP.
SURE IS.
IT REALLY IS...
...A HARD JOB, ISN'T IT?

I'M ONLY ONE PERSON.
I SPENT TWENTY-SIX YEARS LEARNING THE MEDICAL ARTS...
...AND IT STILL KILLS ME TO WATCH LIVES WEAKEN AND ESCAPE ME.
FOR PUTTING YOU...
...IN THAT STATE OF MIND.
I'M SORRY, DOCTOR.
...I CAN ONLY TRULY SAVE BUT A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE.
I'M FULLY AWARE THAT OVER MY ENTIRE LIFESPAN ...
YOU'RE A STRONGER MAN THAN I!
WELL, YOU GOT ME!

I'M NOT STRONG IN THE LEAST!
NOT AT ALL!!
ALL I AM...
...IS IGNORANT TO THE TRUTH.
NOW, THEN!
IT'S TIME TO MAKE THE ROUNDS, SO I SHOULD BE GOING.
UH, BUT...
I DON'T UNDER-STAND WHAT YOU...

PLUS ...
...EVEN IF I KNEW THE TRUTH...
...IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT SHOULD BE BROUGHT INTO THE OPEN.
.....
GOOD-BYE, DOCTOR!
SEE YOU LATER. ♡
.....

NANBU-DONO WENT AHEAD AND TOOK SHIMATANI-DONO'S INFORMATION TO...
YAMAZAKI ...
I'VE GOT SOMETHING I NEED TO TELL YOU. YOU OUGHT TO KNOW.
MASTER.
I'VE FINISHED CLEANING UP THE EXAMINATION ROOM.
WHAT IS IT, SIR?
THE MAN HIMSELF ALREADY KNOWS THE TRUTH.
BUT I HOPE THAT YOU CAN HELP MINIMIZE FURTHER DAMAGE WITHOUT ATTRACTING ATTENTION.
...FURTHER?
AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE...?
I AM SPEAKING OF A PARTICULAR AFFLICTION.

ITS POISONS INFECT THE LUNGS, INHIBITING THE RESPIRATION AND CAUSING A COUGH.
THE COUGH LEADS TO BLOODY PHLEGM.
BY THE TIME BLOOD IS EXPECTORATED, THE PATIENT HAS A YEAR LEFT TO LIVE, AT BEST.

A BLOODY, UNSTOPPABLE DISEASE...
IT KILLS THE YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE.
NO CURE HAS BEEN FOUND.

Peace Maker Kurogane 3 End

☆ Hello, there! This is Chrono. I realize I came up with another terribly dark and depressing cover, but I'm glad you decided to pick up the book anyways! The story itself is...well, dark as usual.

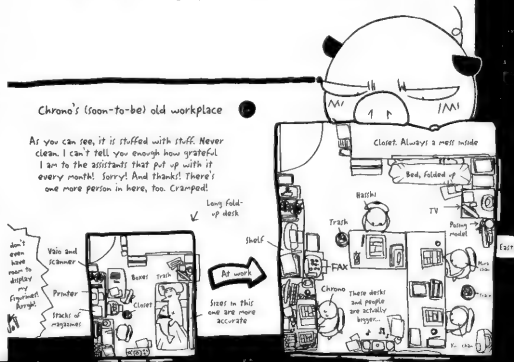
☆ At the moment I am writing this, we're stuck smack in the middle of the rainy season. What a crappy way to wake up! I'm feeling really blue! I feel like I've been in a slump recently, so maybe this is the reason why... My drafts and initial artwork are just taking forever, it seems! I drew the pic to the left, hoping to get back into shape. For some reason I never have trouble drawing guys if their skin is exposed... (just another regular old perv). And it's such a busy time for me, too! I'm going to try hard to keep myself in high spirits.

☆ I'm afraid that the current spot in the story is really boring. I'm sorry that you have to suffer through it, but because it is crucial to the story, I have to spend time on it... Please, stick with me.

Sometimes I just want to draw sharp bodylines. You don't get that chance with kimonos, because they're so baggy and concealing. Either way, the Tetris on the left is way too big.

Boxing cosplay? I don't even know anymore...

☆ Oops! I'm getting a little too gloomy again! Let's try to turn things around with a happy topic for once. Just the other day, I managed to snag myself a new apartment for a workplace! Yay! It looks like I'll finally have a work studio fit for a mangaka... though I haven't actually moved in yet. That means goodbye to the bedroom studio at my parents' house. So I think I'll introduce the old room, the one I've used to draw Peace Maker up until now. It's not very exciting... in fact, it's cramped and filthy. Barely anything that would tip you off that it's a girl's room. That's right, just a plain old otaku bedroom. Pfu! I'll give you a tour of the new place once I've settled in. Boy, I'd sure love to get on a productivity streak in a clean new apartment! Well, that's enough personal stories for now.


Chrono's (soon-to-be) old workplace
As you can see, it is stuffed with stuff. Never clean. I can't tell you enough how grateful I am to the assistants that put up with it every month! Sorry! And thanks! There's one more person in here, too. Cramped!
Long fold-up desk
Vain and schooner
Printer
Stacks of magazines
Boxes
Trash
Closet
don't even have room to display my figurines! Sorrg!
At work
Stress in this one are more accurate
Shelf
Closet. Always a mess inside
Bed, folded up
Hatchi
TV
Trash
Fax
Chrono
Desks and people are actually bigger...
Entr

I know it's a bit better than in the first and second volumes, but I'm still sorry my afterword looks so crappy!
I have to send this thing off immediately, hope you understand.
Skinny
Poooof
I think the stress is making me fat!
Thanks for buying the third volume! Or, if you didn't buy it, thanks for reading anyway!
I was going for a look that added a modern S&W with a classic S&W and spit out the average between the two!
And I don't have the time to try again, so I gave up on the idea!
No
And yet I still draw swords super easy like I don't even care
PTUI!
Yeah!
But somehow, I lost the design papers!!
I was thinking of using this page to talk about the design of Sakamoto Ryoma's pistol, the Smith & Wesson!
I don't want to go back to the usual stupid moe talk!
If I have nothing else to do, I'll just draw some pictures!
(Which I do anyway!)
Aaah!
And if I don't have that tidbit to share, what am I left with? Nothing!
Saya
Not cute...
● I haven't drawn her in a while, have I? The real problem is that there doesn't seem to be a problem if I leave her out of the story. Not a good sign for the heroine, technically speaking. Better do something about that...
Well, I filled up the required space, so I'll see you next time, I hope!

In the middle of ridiculousness:
YOSHIDA
The New Yoshida Revolution!
I took "the man's" power...
...and gained a new body...
Take a good look....!!
Don't underestimate him, just because he's cute (?)!
GYaaa!
BAMF
Waah! I can't get close!
It comes out of his butt, too!
Even the demon sword is useless against it!
What do you mean "we"? You did that yourself, Toshi!
Dammit! If only we hadn't got rid of our ultimate weapon, Cyber-Kamo 2!

Hah! So this is the best the Shinsengumi 11th Squad has to offer?
Soon my wrath shall descend ...
And plunge the city of Kyo into darkness!
Ho ho! I see you boys are fighting awfully hard...
Ah.
clack
You... you're ...
Let us explain ...
four t
yea
in C
battle
to
back
fo
plagu
(red
Tho
gathered there were known as the Roshigumi (a.k.a. Shinsengumi) and the magic sword they wielded (redacted). His hairstyle is that of the ancient Yamato period. In short, he is a person of great wisdom and importance.
You, who fight against the demonic powers...
...you presume to call yourselves the 11th squad?!
Ho ho!
Roshi...!!!

I'm ashamed to add more...